A SURVEY OF SOME CHINESE TEMPLES IN KUALA LUMPUR

Yap Beng Choo

No. Matrik 042060

Latihan Ilmiah

Bagi memenuhi sebahagian

daripada syarat-syarat untuk

Ijazah Sarjana Muda Sastera

Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosiologi

Universiti Malaya

Kuala Lumpur

Sesi 1984

SYNOPSIS

This study, which is a survey of some Chinese temples in Kuala Lumpur, is divided into six chapters. In Chapter One, the writer gives the aim of the study, ie. to gain an insight into some of the sociological aspects of the temples in Kuala Lumpur, the methods used and the problems faced in her study.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature available on the Chinese religious systems and temples.

Chapter Three is based upon the data collected on the Chinese temples in Kuala Lumpur, ie. on the establishment and the development of these temples, how they were set up and who set up these temples, the different types of temples and the descriptions of these temples.

Chapter Four is on the social organization of the temples, ie. the people directly and indirectly involved in the running of the temples.

Chapter Five gives a detailed description of the religious and social activities in the temples.

In Chapter Six, the writer concludes on the significance of the Chinese temples to the Chinese in Malaysia today.

List of tables

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Chinese Religious Background

Generally, the Chinese temple is regarded as one of the most remarkable and impressive buildings that can be found in a locality. These Chinese temples are numerous and they are of all sizes and descriptions. The primary function of these religious buildings is to house objects of public worship(ie. deities), mainly for the devotees to communicate with the deities. Devotees of all ages and various dialects visit these temples to seek favours of the deities or to thank them for prayers answered.

For the Chinese, human abilities and efforts alone are not sufficient to guarantee their physical well-being, economic success or family harmony. They feel that success in the world is not entirely within human control. They need the blessings of spiritual forces. Hence innumerable deities are worshipped. A fair number of these are known to all (eg. Kuan Yin, Kuan Ti, etc) but many of them are known only to a few individuals.

Even though the Chinese are generally regarded as religious, they do not really devote themselves to a certain religion. Neither do they completely understand the teachings and the deities of that religion. For example, most of them would find difficulty in distinguishing between a Buddhist and a Taoist deity but that does

not matter for they are quite prepared to patronize any deity, regardless of his origin. Besides this, if a Chinese is asked what religion he follows, he might be confused. He might simply profess to be a Buddhist even though he knows little or nothing of Buddhism. He might just use the label 'Taoist' in the same manner or the answer will simply be 'pai shen', ie. 'I worship gods'.[1] To the Chinese, the different religions are treated as parts of a single Chinese religion. Vivienne Wee used the term 'Chinese Religion' to denote the religious systems underlying the beliefs and th e practices of the Chinese. According to Wee, majority of those who declare themselves to be Buddhists, Taoists or etc are actually practitioners of Chinese Religion, defined as follows : "... a specific range of religious needs, a cosmology and a certain pattern of religious behaviour. Chinese Religion in this sense might be thought of as an empty bowl which can variously be filled with the contents of institutionalized religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, the Chinese syncretic religions such as 'Sanyi Chiao' and 'Chen K'ung Chiao' or even Hinduism and Christianity .... "[2]

Thus, Buddhist deities are found enshrined in Taoist temples and vice versa and Buddhist and Taoist priests have joined together for the performance of many rituals. Each kind of priest offers a limited range of services and though there is some degree of overlap in these services, the same clientele would go to different temples as the occasion demanded. This suggested the various temple-types are required and no single temple can replace the others by offering a full and complete range of services.

Even though one can see altars in almost every Chinese household, the Chinese temples are still regarded as important institutions for religious activities, and the objects of worship in the temples are generally considered more powerful than those that are worshipped privately at domestic altars. Devotees might not pray in a temple very often but during temple festivals, they will flock to their temples to pay homage to the deities, including those whom they have already worshipped at home. Besides worshipping in their homes and in temples in their own locality, these devotees will also travel beyond their locality for their religious activities.

1.2 Aims and scope of study

This study aims to gain an insight into some of the sociological aspects of the temples in Kuala Lumpur. Firstly, the historical background and the development of the temples in Kuala Lumpur will be studied. Kuala Lumpur, being one of the earliest settlements of the Chinese immigrants has among its numerous temples, some of the oldest and most revered temples, some of which date from the earliest days of the settlement. Hence, it is an ideal place for the study of Chinese temples.

This study will also identify the types of temples in existence, which will mainly be Buddhist and Taoist and a few of the syncretic cults, ie. 'Sanyi Chiao' and 'Chenkung Chiao'. The main focus will be on the social aspects of these temples, ie. the social organizations and the religious and social activities of the various temples. All these will be analysed to assess their significance in the lives of the Chinese in Kuala Lumpur.

This study was also undertaken in view of that fact that very little has been written on the Chinese temples in Malaysia, let alone Kuala Lumpur. Those that have been made are mostly on the temples in Taiwan, Singapore and mainland China. Thus, the writer hopes that this brief study will add to the small collection of studies available on Chinese temples and also it will help to generate an understanding of the religious life of the Chinese.

1.3 Methodology

This study was conducted with a combination of different research techniques in order to gather the various types of data required. It was carried out between March and July 1984. The main field-work method was the informal interview, using a Key-informant. This method is considered the most suitable in this kind of study where only relevant people were interviewed and the informants were given the freedom to express their views. It also enables one to probe a great deal into details. In addition, observations were also made where necessary, especially during the temple ceremonies and activities.

All the interviews were conducted personally by the writer, using mainly Hokkien as majority of the informants were Hokkiens. Cantonese was used when interviewing non-Hokkien speaking informants while English was used whenever the informants were conversant in English. All the interviews were conducted informally in the temples. The informants were aware of the writer's identity and purpose of study and most of them were very cooperative and helpful. Notes were taken down

either during the interviews or after.

1.4 Sampling

A total of 30 temples were chosen non-randomly for the study. Selection was based mainly upon the writer's knowledge of the existence and the locality of the temples. Some of these temples were encountered by chance while the writer was exploring a certain area. For the selection of informants, priority was given to interviewing those having close relationship with the temples as these people were the most knowledgeable individuals of the temple's affairs. They were the resident monks and nuns, the temple committee members, the temple-mediums, the temple-keepers and helpers. Occasionally, regular visitors who were knowledgeable of the temple's affairs were interviewed.

1.5 Problems encountered

A number of problems were faced in the course of the study and in the process of gathering data. First of all, there is the problem of getting the right informants. Some informants were initially uncooperative and reluctant to be interviewed. After reassuring them that their names are not required and stressing the aim of the study, they eventually talked willingly. Then there were those who were friendly and enthusiastic initially but as time went by, they became more reluctant to talk. When the degree of cooperation is low, the writer chose to end the interview immediately. At times, language barrier arose in which the writer could not communicate very much, especially with the older folks who spoke in

Chinese dialects. Limited knowledge in Chinese was a great disadvantage which resulted in the loss of valuable information. Available written materials in Chinese could not be consulted.[3]

Most of the informants were ignorant of their temples' affairs, especially on the establishment and the history of the temples. Then, there were those who were secretive and those who distorted their answers for their own interests. Hence, the writer had to make sure not to take for granted everything said by the informants. Verification of data was done to check the consistency of the information received by posing the same question at different times of the interviews or during later visits.

Notes to Chapter One

1. The word 'pai' refers to the physical motions (particularly to the motions of the hands) and the mental attitudes in sign of reverence. The word 'shen' stands for a category of powerful spiritual beings which have to be worshipped in order to secure human well-being.

2. Wee, Vivienne 1977, "Religion & Ritual Among The Chinese of Singapore: An ethnographic study", M.A. Thesis, University of Singapore; p. 7.

3. For example, Choo, Chin Tow 1968, "Some Sociological Aspects Of The Chinese Temples In Kuala Lumpur", M.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 The background of the Chinese religious systems

The popular religion of the Chinese people has been variously described as "folk religion", "religion of the masses", "shenism" or "Chinese Religion" by well-known authors on Chinese religion.[1] It is syncretic in nature in which it is an amorphous mass of beliefs and practices from various sources. Majority of the Chinese follow a religion which combines Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, a few sectarian religions and the ancient cult of China. This syncretic religion combining the different modes of thought is manifested in the same individual but at different times and at different occasions.

First, we will study the religious systems that became firmly integrated parts of the Chinese culture, ie. the three traditional systems of thoughts; Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Among these three, only Confucianism and Taoism are indigenous to China while Buddhism is a foreign importation from India.

2.1.1 Confucianism

Many have regarded Confucianism as a faith, not a full-fledged theistic religion as it set up no supernatural dogma as premises of its teaching but only a basic worldly orientation. This supports the claim

that there was only a Confucian cult of the state and not however a Confucian religion. Confucius himself is reputed by many modern scholars to have been a political reformer rather than a religious leader.

Confucians believed in a moral code embracing the individual, the family, the society and for a certain degree, the state. Life and death in this world are interpreted in terms of moral responsibilities to man and not to any supernatural power. However, born in a superstitious ridden period and in a society where religion was a pervasive influence, Confucianism later adopted many religious elements which raised it to the level of a religion instead of being simply an ethical system. Among these, ancestor worship, an element of the early Chinese culture, was finally integrated into it.

Ancestor worship emphasizes on filial piety which is considered the most important of all virtues. Large sums of money are often spent on funerals even if one might have to borrow to do so. Filial piety is also demonstrated with the offerings of food, incense and paper effigies of all kinds such as cars, houses, money, etc. on the birthday and the death anniversary of the deceased, etc.[2]

To the Chinese, death is just the end of a phase after which the spirit passes to another state of existence. It is believed that when one dies, the soul will survive and lodge in three places: the grave, the spirit-tablet in the ancestral shrine and Heaven.[3] At regular times throughout the year, members of the family meet to perform customary rites of ancestor worship at the ancestral shrine or temple. Ancestral temples

are exclusively for people who are believed to have shared a common descent such as members of the same clan. The spirit-tablets are hierarchically arranged on the altars, the position being dictated by the actual age and other generational principles. For the vertical dimension, the top is more prestigious while horizontally, distances from the center represent a decrease in rank.

In Malaysia, Confucian principles are of negligible importance. Probably all that lingers of Confucianism here today is the cult of ancestor worship. Spirit-tablets are being set up in many homes and temples. However, the family system here has been severely weakened in the process of emigration and few have established an ancestral temple after the old pattern.

2.1.2 Taoism

Taoism of today has undergone considerable changes since it first started out as a highly metaphysical system of philosophy. Its founder, Lao Tzu, was born in the year 604BC and he was well-known for his tremendous wealth of knowledge and wisdom and his book 'Tao Te Ching' (The Classic of the Way and Virtue). His mystical philosophy was based on the concept of 'Tao' (meaning'the Way'), a metaphor which guides, controls, inspires, precedes and causes all things. Things should be allowed to run their own course and by this, only could mankind live in conformity with its principles.

As with Confucius, the principles attributed to Lao Tzu were

probably derived from far older system of thought, possibly the 'Yin-yang' school which attributed the cause of all movements in the universe to contending positive and negative forces. Taoism became notable for its use of magic, its belief in superstitions, divinations, fortune-telling, alchemy, usage of 'fu', brass mirrors, 'feng-shui' (geomancy), etc.[4] It has a stronghold upon the religious thoughts and practices of the Chinese. By the 5th A.D., it became an institutionalized religion with temples, a priesthood and a pantheon of deities, the highest being 'Yuhuang shangdi' (the Jade Emperor on the high).

The form of Taoism that was brought to Malaysia by the earliest Chinese immigrants was not of the lofty metaphysical dialectics of the sage Lao Tzu, but the debased version of its accretion of superstitions and magical practices. These influences are strongly visible in most temples.

2.1.3 Buddhism

Buddhism was introduced to China by the monks from India in the 1st century A.D. Although both Hinayana (known also as Theravada or the Lesser Vehicle) and Mahayana Buddhism (the Greater Vehicle) were introduced into China, the Mahayana School was predominant and has had a greater influence upon the Chinese. It advocated pity for all creatures and salvation for all humanity as the only possible means of achieving personal salvation, besides the attainment of salvation and Enlightenment through the merits of Bodhisattvas.

Buddhism developed vigorously only after the scriptures were translated into Chinese towards the end of the 4th century. Among the Indian ideas incorporated into Chinese Buddhism were the doctrines of transmigration, rebirth or reincarnation and Karma. Life of Monasticism is another major contribution made by Buddhism to the Chinese religious life which was later adopted by some Taoists as well. For the common people, the Buddhist priesthood or monasticism which requires the renunciation of secular life and the withdrawal from society, was a spiritual consolation from the devastating wars, the heavy taxations, and the economic hardship in China at that time. It was a relief to many as they are now exempted from the military conscriptions and public levies.

Buddhism in China was also tolerant of the local religious practices and it gradually absorbed many other elements until it became a very definitely Chinese system of religion, eventually giving places in its pantheon to many Chinese local heroes such as 'Kuan Ti' (God of War). It continued to develop in the direction of a purely Chinese form, an essential adaptation, to the extent that the countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were given Chinese characteristics. One of the most influential schools in Mahayana Buddhism, the Pure Land School, is of Chinese origin.

2.1.4 The ancient cult

The original indigenous religion of China has frequently been neglected in the historical account. This classical religion attained full development in the Chou dynasty (1122-221 B.C.) before the foreign influence of Buddhism and the rise of Taoism and Confucianism. The core of this

ancient cult is the worship of Heaven and its pantheon of subordinates (deities) and the worship of ancestor. In this cult, there exists a dichotomy in the spiritual world with the pantheon of 'shen' (deities) at the top and 'kuei' (spirits) at the bottom. This ancient cult was already well-developed by the time of Confucius, later formulated into a theological system of 'Yin-yang' and the 'Five-Elements' as operational principles of the universe and the human world (see 2.2.1).

2.1.5 Sectarien religions

Traditionally in China, the major religions are recognised to be Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Any other Chinese religions are perceived as being derived from these three religions. Thus, they are regarded as religious sects rather than religions. The theologies of these sectarian religions are syncretistic, usually a combination of the elements of the three great religious systems of China. Today, these sects are seem to be losing their identity and distinctiveness and are only of minor significance. The focus of this section will be on 'Sanyi Chiao' and 'Chen K'ung Chiao'.

The teachings of 'Chen K'ung Chiao'(Religion of the Void) claim to enable its true believers to eliminate opium-smoking habit, to cure disease and generally live a pure life. The practitioners worship only their founder who is known as 'Chen K'ung Chu' and some of his disciples. No images of deities, not even its founder, are worshipped. The object of worship is a mirror with a written character, 'K'ung' (Emptiness), in the middle. The mirror is used to symbolise emptiness which is the central concept of this cult but it has been reinterpreted by the Chinese as the

object containing 'shen' and is treated accordingly with offerings of incense and food. Behind the altar are five chairs in which the 'shen' (the founder and the disciples) may symbolically sit during ceremonies with the founder in the centre.

The temples of this cult also act as undertakers, arranging for the services of geomancers, Taoist or Buddhist priests, brass-bands and a number of functions connected with death. There is always a mortuary and a small room for housing temporary spirit-tablets beside the temple. A fee will be paid to the undertaker for these services. The temple is also a centre for curing opium addicts as this is the speciality of the cult. However, there are few addicts today and one might expect the popularity of this cult to have declined correspondingly.

The founder of 'Sanyi Chiao' (Three-In-One Doctrine), Lin Zhao'en, also known as 'Sanyi Chiao Chu', was born in the 'Hsing hua' prefecture in the province of 'Fuhkien' and he attempted to syncretize the three teachings of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism into a single system. He was later on worshipped as a 'shen' especially by the people of 'Hsing hua' prefecture where he almost exclusively appear in temples of 'Hsing hua' dialect-groups. Choo Chin Tow has classified this sect as definitely Taoist.[5] Although a strong emphasis on Taoist elements can be observed, this is however only a later development.

2.2 Chinese cosmology

In Chinese systems, man is always seen in relation to the cosmos.

Human behaviour is understood and is explained as a response to the various powers and energies which flow to and from the various directions or sites of power-points. This awareness of the cosmological power-points gave rise to highly systematized arrangements which became the basis of the Chinese systems of fortune-telling, 'feng-shui', 'yin-yang', etc.

2.2.1 The 'Yin-yang' cosmogony (Chinese philosophical dualism)

The Chinese thought has long divided the universe into two fundamental principles or forces: the 'yang' principle which embodies the attributes of light, maleness, life, godliness which are positive forces while the 'yin' embodies the opposites of these characteristics - darkness, femaleness and by extension, often symbolizes the ghostly forces of death and evil. In theory, both elements are equally necessary for the maintenance of the balance of the world since neither is meaningful except in relation to one another. Even though complementary, both are also mutually destructive and an attempt is made to banish one of them and accentuate the other. This creates the state of imbalance because all inhabitants of the world are striving to maximize the 'yang' power.

2.2.2 'Feng-shui' (Geomancy)

The art of geomancy deals with the supernatural relations of geographical locations to human events, ie. the good and bad future depends upon the location of things. The merits and demerits of a location are interpreted in accordance with the 'yin-yang' principles and the 'Five-elements' (ie. Earth, Metal, Water, Wood and Fire) which are considered

to be invisibly linked with the fortune and misfortune of man. One should consult a geomancer before deciding upon a site or fixing the direction of a house, building, temple or grave. For example, the choice of a grave site will affect the future of the descendants of the deceased. Thus, the site has to be carefully planned to secure, both for the occupant and the survivors, every possible comforts and advancements. It is because of this that wealthy family usually has its grave site selected years in advance, the construction of the grave being supervised by its future occupant.

Many temples are located on mountains and hills and bodies of water, the last being dedicated to deities that have jurisdiction over water to protect human beings, especially sea-farers, from the dangers of the 'Underworld'. Mountain denotes physical closeness to Heaven and the higher the mountain, the purer it is considered to be. Besides this, the positions of objects of worship on temple altars are of great importance. The centre of the wall directly facing the main entrance to the temple is considered the most importance. If the place is occupied by several deities in a row, the one in the middle is the main deity, followed by the one on the left (the 'right' refers to the right side of a person standing in the hall facing out of the entrance and vice versa). As the left position is the seat of honour and ancestors are low in rank, thus they are placed on the right side of the main altar in the case of domestic worship of deities and ancestors.

2.3 Belief in divination

Divination is an act or practice of trying to foretell the

future and the unknown which involves either the manipulation of techniques or the interpretation of natural phenomena. It is also a form of sympathetic magic used to induce supernatural forces to yield their secrets concerning the course of events in nature and in man. It has been an important means by which man, in a crisis or difficulty, tries to gain confidence, guidance and consolation when all rational means had failed to provide a solution.

The belief of divination arises from the belief in 'shen' and 'kuei', both having the power to influence men's lives. Generally, efforts are made to enlist the help of 'shen' to better their well-being while the 'kuei' are appeased to avoid calamity. The Chinese also believe in fatalism: fate and luck are predestined by the 'shen'. Fate is fixed and cannot be changed while luck is variable and can be manipulated to one's favour through the aid of a specialist. A widespread concept is that luck comes and goes in cycles and by correct use of methods of divination, its movements can be foretold and to a limited extent, altered advantageously.

The various methods of divination are the divination blocks and sticks, fortune-tellers, 'tung shu', spirit-mediums, 'automatic-writing', etc.[6] Divination blocks (mu pei), made of timber in the shape of kidneys, come in a pair each with a convex and concave side(see section 3.4.5). Fortune sticks are carved bamboo sticks each with a number which relates to a number on a fortune strip(see section 3.4.5). The traditional Chinese almanac, 'tung shu' (Book of everything) includes practical advice, fortune-telling and reading omens for propitious occasions.

2.4 Studies on Chinese temples

Temples are not only places where one go to pray but they

simultaneously have the function of enabling people from the same village to meet, assemble and interact. In China, the largest and most impressive buildings are generally these structures. Even in towns and cities, only the government office buildings sometimes surpassed the temples in size and in impressiveness. In fact, these temples often commanded allocation of huge financial and human resources for their constructions. The public would allocate heavy financial support for a religious occasion but they often failed to raise a similar amount for, example, an educational project or irrigation.[7]

2.4.1 Functions of temples

The Chinese temples serve a wide range of functions. C.K.Yang has classified these functions based on the nature of the main deity in the temple.[8] In a monotheistic religion, the people would pray to one god for all their spiritual needs, but in the Chinese polytheistic tradition, they pray to different gods for different purposes. Hence, they would go to different temples for different functions.

For economics blessings and success, the Chinese pray to universal deities such as the 'God of Wealth', 'God of Prosperity' or patron deities of crafts and trades. For health, they pray to deities specializing in medicine, dispelling epidemics or healing illnesses such as 'Hua t'o', 'Fachu kung' and 'Nach'a santai tzu'. Certain temples serve to integrate and look after the well-being of the social organizations; the devotees pray for a successful marriage, fertility (Kuan Yin is the most popular in this) or for kinship values (filial piety as in ancestral shrine). Some

temples serve to protect and look after the welfare of the local community and also their personal welfares with deities that give blessings to them or devil-dispelling deities, etc. Certain temples are dedicated to deified personalities who had accomplished great deeds for the nation and the community.

Some temples serve as monasteries or nunneries, as relatively secluded residences for the monks and nuns who tried to lead a life completely dedicated to the teachings of the gods in hope of salvation of their souls. The classification of temples according to the functions of the deities is not absolute due to the multifunctional nature of many, if not most of the deities.

2.4.2 Characteristics of temples

Elliott A.J.A. categorized the Chinese temples into three types.[9] The first being the ancestral hall, the focus for worship in a lineage. However, this practice is gradually loosing its popularity. Some of the Chinese associations (clan, district or dialect) may still carry out a few of the functions usually found in connection with an ancestral hall. The second type belongs to the Buddhist monastic ideal, dependant upon the patronage of wealthy men. The third type is based upon the neighbourhood which is by far the most prevalent type of temple found and many of them have been established by residential communities and supported by them.

The early Chinese immigrants, originating from different provinces and were from different dialect-groups with different customs, were

rather unfriendly and even hostile towards one another. Because of this and many other social problems, people from the same group united to form an association (clan, dialect or district) to serve their own group. These associations performed many functions. Among them were taking care of the welfare of the immigrants, performing commercial, charitable, sporting and recreational activities, performing kinship functions such as storing of ancestor-tablets, the building and management of cemeteries, temples, schools, etc. Temples erected were dedicated to their own deities. For example, 'Tien Hou' is associated with the 'Lin' clan or the Hainanese dialect clan. However, the associations do not necessarily prohibit members of other groups from worshipping in their temples. Such a temple is also commonly incorporated under a special board of trustees that controls its incomes and thus out of the hands of the elected association leaders.

Generally, the board of trustees is comprised of a 'Lu chu' and a few 'T'ou chia'.[10] The 'Lu chu' or temple-master is the President of the board of trustees. Along with him are 'T'ou chia' or temple-elders who assume special duties such as those of the treasurer, secretary, etc. These chiefs are elected as determined by lots, from the circle of wealthy people during the main temple festival. The most important task of the board is the preparation and the execution of the main deity's birthday celebration. Hence, a temple can either be managed by a private person, a temple committee, a board of trustees or a mixture of these.

Regarding the Chinese Buddhist temples, Moese distinguished three different types that can be found: 'Ni an' (nuns' temples), 'Seng ssu' (temples of the monks) and 'Chai tang' (Vegetarian houses).[11] 'Seng ssu'

and 'Ni an resemble each other closely. Smaller temples are taken care of by only one or two nuns or monks who generally live there as well. Majority of the monks were ordained in China whilemost of the nuns were 'unofficially' ordained by their own master. This 'spoken ordination' is much cheaper compared to the full ordination ceremony performed by monasteries possessing the right to ordain.[12] 'Chai tang' are founded and maintained by women who have joined together to lead a life according to religious principles, including undertaking to take only vegetarian food. They are also a sanctuary for elderly women who chose to live out their days in peace in the temples.

The purposes of the temples are not only limited to religious activities; they also include cultural and social activities. Hsing Fu Chuan, in his study of Buddhist Temples in Taiwan has noted culture, education and charitable cause as the three life-saving appliances of Buddhism. The temples also set up various welfare programmes such as nursery schools, nursing homes, orphanages, clinics, hospitals, public cemeteries, etc. Sometimes the temples offer shelter to victims of flood or fire; clothing, food or even coffins are distributed to these victims or the poor. These costs are not necessarily paid by rich donors. Many of these are also financed by the temple's own funds.

2.4.3 Classifications of deities

McDougall has noted that there is a hierarchy of four classes among the Buddhist deities.[13] The highest class consists of Buddhas (known in Chinese as 'Fo') such as Sakyamuni, Amitabha, Bahisajyaguru (known in Chinese as 'Yao shih fu' or 'the Lord of Light and Medicine'), etc. The word

'Buddha' means the 'Enlightened One', a title given to the founder of the religion and later to those who have achieved and taught the way to 'Enlightenment'. The second class consists of Bodhisattvas('Pusa') such as 'Kuan Yin' (Avalokitesvara), 'Mi-lo fo' (Maitreya: the Laughing Buddha), 'Ti tsang wang' (Ksitigarbha: the Lord of the Hades), etc. Bodhisattvas are those who have attained a state of spiritual perfection only to renounce the final entry into Buddhahood so that they may return to the world in order to serve suffering humanity. The third class, Arhats ('lo-han'), do not often appear in Chinese temples and they are mostly the disciples of a Buddha. The fourth class includes all the tutelary deities that the Chinese can think of including deities of purely local origin such as the Straits-born deities.

Noese has classified the non-Buddhist deities according to regionalism into universal, regional and deities of 'Nanyang' origin.[14] Universal deities are worshipped or known by almost everyone such as 'Wen chang' (God of Literature), 'Nacha santai tzu' and 'Yuhuang shangti'. Regional deities are only known to a limited number of people and to certain groups exclusively such as 'Wu-ta jen' and 'Fa-chu kung' as among the Hokkien group, 'Sanyi chiao chu' among the 'Hsing-hua' prefecture group, 'Tan kung' as among the Hakka, 'Huang lao hsien shih' among the Cantonese, 'Tien Hou' among the Hainan or 'Lin' clan (Tien Hou, known to them also as 'Ma tsu po', has the surname 'Lin' herself), etc. Among the deities of 'Nanyang' origin are 'Natu kung' (derived from the Malayan title of nobility - 'Datuk'), 'Tapo kung' (known also as 'Fute-cheng shen' or 'Tuo Peh Kong' as among the Hokkiens), 'San-pao kung' (ie. 'Cheng Ho', the eunuch ambassador of the Ming Emperor to Malacca),'Hsien ssu shih yeh' (the Sungei Ujong Capitan

and a superior of Yap Ah Loy), etc.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. See for example Topley, M., 1956, "Chinese Religion and Religious Institutions in Singapore", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch, Vol.29, Part 1; Comber, L., 1958, "Chinese Temples in Singapore", Eastern Universities Press, Singapore; Elliott, A.J.A., 1955, "Chinese Spirit-mediums Cults in Singapore", Athlone Press, London; Wee, V., op. cit.

2. In the past in China, real sacrifices of clothing, wives, concubines and servants were offered to ensure that the deceased did not want for anything in the 'Otherworld' to which he was accustomed to in this world. And offerings were made at appropriate times to appease the spirits.

3. Comber, L., 1956, "Chinese Ancestor Worship in Malaya", Donald Moore, Singapore, p.4.

4. 'Fu' or charms are used in treatment of problems, varying in size and colours in which yellow charms are used most often. The prints on the 'fu' are usually in red or black. It is either burnt and swallowed with water, affixed to house walls for protection or folded up and worn as amulets to ward off evil spirits. These 'fu' are either written by the priest or 'dangki' or they are printed from wooden blocks (for standardized version). The mirrors are placed on altars and doors to ward off evil.

5. Moese, W., 1979, "Chinese Regionalism in West Malaysia and Singapore", Hamburg, p.313.

6. 'Automatic-writing is a type of spirit-mediumship. The forked branch is made from peach tree (because it bears the fruits of immortality) and it is painted red to increase its ghosts dispelling capacity, approximately 18 inches long and shaped like the letter 'Y' with a short stump at almost right angles to the arms. The stump serves to face some divine scrawls on the sand, incense ash, etc poured out on a tray. The end of the stick is carved in the shape of a dragon's head and is painted gold leaf. The 'dangki' holds one arm of the fork with his right hand while his assistant the other with his left who merely behaves passively.

7. Yang, C.K., 1967, "Religion in the Chinese Society", University of California Press, pp. 15-16.

8. Ibid., pp. 7-15.

9. Elliott, op. cit., pp.40-41.

10. Moese, op. cit., p. 351.

11. Op. cit., p. 306.

12. Topley, op. cit., p. 71.

13. McDougall, C., 1956, "Buddhism in Malaya", Donald Moore, Singapore, pp. 22-23.

14. Moese, op. cit., pp. 325-336. The term 'Nanyang' (Southern Ocean) refers to the Southeast Asian countries.

CHAPTER THREE

CHINESE TEMPLES IN KUALA LUMPUR

3.1 Early Chinese settlers in Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur is a city to which many people have come, mainly for economic reasons. The influx of Chinese miners to Kuala Lumpur occurred after 1857 when Raja Abdullah, the ruling chief at Klang, introduced Chinese miners into what was to become the Kuala Lumpur tin-field.[1] Then, Yap Ah Loy, the Kapitan China of Kuala Lumpur, raised Kuala Lumpur from an obscure mining village to become the most important town in Peninsular Malaya.[2]

The mass immigration in the second half of the 19th century increased the Chinese population in Kuala Lumpur. Besides having played an important role in the history and the rise of Kuala Lumpur, these early Chinese emigrants had also brought along with them their culture and religious practices. They had brought with them deities from their native land besides deifying the local heroes and some prominent figures from Kuala Lumpur.[3] Many temples were built and today, these temples are among some of our oldest and most revered buildings.

3.2 Establishment of temples

3.2.1 Period of establishment

Most of the temples' informants were rather vague about the exact date of establishment or the historical background of their temples.

Very few had paid attention to these matters. Some of these information can be traced by a careful study of the existing plaques, tablets, written records or documents kept by the temples. Otherwise, the information were obtained from the informants themselves.

TABLE 3.1 : The period of establishment of the temples in Kuala Lumpur

Period	Number of temples
Before 1900	7
1901 - 1940	3
1941 - 1950	6
1951 - 1960	2
1961 - 1970	3
1971 - 1980	3
After 1980	1
Do not know the period	5
Total	30

Table 3.1 shows that the period before the year 1950 can be considered a period of great temple-building activities. On the other hand, temples of recent origin are few. Temples established not long after Kuala Lumpur was founded include Sze Ya Muew, Kuan Tai Muew, Choon Wan Koong, Kuan Yin Sze (Birch Road) and a few others. Apparently, many of these old temples are clustered and concentrated in the old parts of the city, such as the city centre, Jalan Ampang, Jalan Pudu, etc., while relatively few are found in completely new localities (areas of recent growths), especially new residential areas.

3.2.2 Formation of new temples

Baity has listed two methods of forming a new temple.[4] The first is how a temple has emerged from a home altar where the popularity of the home deity has spread as a result of its efficacy in answering petitions and prayers. Eventually, this home deity is enshrined in a temple; either the home itself is transformed into a temple or the deity is moved from the home altar to be put in a newly established temple. Examples of this type of temples are residential 'dangki' with their patron deities being enshrined in temples such as Lam Tien Men, Ong Boon Fu and Hsing Leng Sze.

The second method is the development of a new branch of temple from an old one by the process of 'fen-shen' or 'the splitting of statues'. A duplicate statue of the deity is made and placed on the altar of an existing temple. It is ceremonially endowed with "life", an act known as 'kai- kuang', usually connected with a mass performed by a priest. The eyes, mouth, nose, ears and occasionally the hands and feet of the statue are dabbed by the priest with red ink or sometimes blood. By virtue of this procedure, the sense-organs of the deity are opened. An image is just the "throne" for a deity. Unless the spirit of the deity has been invited to be present in the image or statue through rites and rituals, the "empty" image is considered meaningless. After the consecration, the image is removed together with some incense ash from the older temple to the new temple. This is the way how most temples came into existence.

A temple might also be formed to enshrine a religious relic found. For example, when a stone relic with the Chinese characters of

'Pachu kung' was discovered at the foot of a tree in Jalan Tong Shin, a 'dangki' was called to enshrine the deity in a small attap hut built specially to house the deity. Today, this hut has been replaced by a huge building (ie. the Zhang Gong Sheng Jun Gong temple).

3.2.3 Types of ownership of temple

Very often, the people who established the temples are themselves the owners. A temple can either be privately or publicly established and owned. In most cases, the owner of a private temple is a single individual for whom the temple will provide a means of subsistence, ie. it will generate income and prestige for its owner. In this category are temples established by monks and nuns, "vegetarian ladies" ('chai-ku'), 'dangki' and the laity (usually family affairs). The control over the finances and the management of the temple is in the hand of the owner himself and not the community. Such a temple may also be the home of its owners who may also serve as the temple-keeper.

On the other hand, the residents of a locality or the public may decide to erect a temple for their worship through public donations. Such a temple belongs to the public and it is opened to all. A temple committee will be selected where the positions may be dominated by the contributors who have given large sum of money to the temple's establishment. An official temple-keeper may be engaged and normally, a Board of Trustees is formed to manage the temple's financial resources. Some of these temples might even invite religious practitioners (especially monks) to take up residence there but with the understanding that the temple with its admini-

stration does not belong to them

A public temple might be affiliated with a formal association or an organization, such as the clan, district or dialect associations of the Chinese community. For examples, Kuan Tai Muew belongs to the Kong Siew Association and Thean Hou Temple to the Kiung Chow Association. Such temples are frequented mostly by members of that clan, district or dialect group.[5] However, out-group members do pray in the temples. There are temples not associated with a formal organization but as these temples were established by a certain clan, they are associated with that particular clan in which the temple committee is made up mostly of that clan's members. Examples of these temples are Leong Puah Kheong, Sin Leng Muew and Huay Leong Kheong which are associated with the Tan clan.

TABLE 3.2 : Types of ownership

Types of ownership and management		Number of temples
Private:	Monk or nun	5
	'Dangki'	1
	'Chai-ku'	2
	Laity	3
Public :	Association	4
	Temple Committee	15
Total		30

Occasionally, a private temple may become publicly owned and controlled when its owner or founder dies. In the case of Hoeh Beng Temple, a committee was formed to run the temple when a suitable monk could not be

found to replace the last resident monk.

3.2.4 Methods of financing the establishment and the upkeep of the temples

Temples are usually erected and established by public donations. Normally, there will be a movement for establishing a temple led by a leader in asking the public for donations. Wealthy individuals who donated generously are very important in financing such establishments and also in the maintenance of these temples.

Although the amount donated to establish the temple varies enormously from an individual to another, even a modest sum is sufficient to ensure that the donor's name will be inscribed conspicuously on a plaque or tablet in the temple. The items donated or purchased through donations collected include the land, the premises, the furniture and the various implements and equipments found in a temple. Cases of land donated to a temple are Sze Ya Muew and Kuan Tai Muew, donated by Yap Ah Loy and Chew Ah Yeok (two prominent figures in the early history of Kuala Lumpur) respectively and Hong San Sze, donated by a wealthy individual. Besides being donated or purchased, the land might also be occupied illegally but with the ownership of the land granted to the temple by the government later on. Lack of funds might cause a temple's premises to be on a rental basis such as Kuan Yin Ting(Jalan Kelang Lama) and Lam Tien Men. In the course of time, with enough funds, new premises might be purchased or erected.

Basically, the temples are maintained by donations from devotees, especially wealthy and prominent people. "Oil money"(the amount collected

for 'hsiang-yu' - adding oil to the lamp) is another regular source but it is only at festivals that a temple can hope to collect much "oil money" and donations. Some temples receive grants from clubs and associations. Other sources are from the sale of incense in the temple, fees charged for placing a spirit-tablet in the ancestral shrine or hall. If the owner is a priest or a 'dangki', further income can be derived from the writing of 'fu' or from rites performed in request.

3.2.5 Connections with other temples

Unlike churches that are linked together by aa central authority, Chinese temples are autonomous in their organizations and activities.[6] However, there are certain temples which identify themselves as offsprings or branches of older and rather famous temples. For example, Sze Ya Muew is affiliated with the original one in Negeri Sembilan, ie. the centre of the cult in Malaysia. Sze Ya Muew is dedicated to Kapitan China Shin under whom Yap Ah Loy had served in Sungei Ujong(ie. Negeri Sembilan now); it was reported that the blood which flowed when the head of Shin was chopped off by his rivals (at the beginning of the decade of 1860) was white and not red in colour. He was afterwards worshipped as a deity in the Negeri Sembilan temple. News that miracles were performed there, people were cured and the worshippers were successful in business reached Kuala Lumpur. Thus, in 1881, Yap Ah Loy donated a piece of his land to build Sze Ya Muew.[7]

Another case is Yuan Thong Sze which is connected with Chin Fatt Sze in Jalan Lapangan-terbang Lama. During the Japanese occupation in Malaya (in the 40s), the resident monks and nuns in Chin Fatt Sze had to vacate

their temple as the Japanese government wanted the temple for the Japanese's public place of worship. Thus Yuan Thong Sze was set up as a replacement. After the Japanese were defeated, Chin Fatt Sze was returned to them. The chief monk decided that his male disciples were to stay in Yuan Thong Sze while the female disciples in Chin Fatt Sze.

Occasionally, unofficial ties exist between some temples, when an individual is a committee member of a few temples, when two temples have the same 'dangki' or the same monk (the resident monk in Kung Yim Kok owns the Kuan Yin Ting in Jalan Kelang Lama).

3.3 Development of the temples

3.3.1 Sizes of the temples

The temples range in size from dilapidated huts to huge concrete buildings. It should be noted that most of the large temples originate from smaller ones. Owing to the shortage of funds, the founders were only able to build a small temple. These were later on renovated, enlarged or rebuilt extensively depending on the funds available or on the patronages of wealthy people. Some temples experienced unavoidable renovations or reconstructions due to occurrences such as fire, serious flood, change of site and most frequent, the deterioration of the condition of the temples.

3.3.2 Change of site

The change of the site of the temple, followed by a complete change in the premises, can be caused by a few factors. The original temple

might be resited due to housing projects, construction of new roads, etc. In the case of a temple, it had a spacious compound originally but the government has acquired a part of its compound and even altered a part of the premises mainly for widening the existing road. For cases like these, either a monetary compensation is made or an alternative site is allocated. Another factor is the unsuitability of the site; limited space which hinders future expansion may cause a temple to be resited or the temple's deity may voice out his dissatisfaction with the site through his 'dangki', etc.

One of the temples has two separate premises (see plates 1 and 2). The original premises had to be vacated for a land reclamation project. A new premises was constructed nearby. However, fearing the same thing would occur to the temple again and having acquired a huge fund now, the monk decided to buy a piece of land to build a bigger temple across the road. Today, the old and new premises exist together but the new one is rarely frequented as devotees would rather pray at the older temple.

3.3.3 Future plans

Generally, a temple's development is unlimited and the temple always has new plans. One such example is the Thean Hou Temple which has developed a lot with its future premises still under construction in Robson Hill (off Jalan Kelang Lama) which is based on a Chinese palace layout.

In order to collect donations for future projects, a temple usually has a special fund-raising drive where the public is invited to contribute either through advertisements in newspapers, charity performances, etc. A list of the costs of various parts of the new temple , equipments, etc is provided in which the names of the donors will be inscribed.

As construction and repair works on temples are supported by the public contributions, the works may go along for a time and then stop for a period of time when the funds have been used up. They had to wait until enough funds have been collected before they could continue ahead. Some people who are craftsmen and artisans would donate their works in place of monetary aid or are paid less.

There are cases where the development of the temple has been very slow or even nil.These are usually unpopular temples with difficulty in raising funds for their future projects. The temple's development can also be restricted by limited space in which the temple is surrounded by other premises, especially in congested parts of the city. If the temple is already large and elaborate enough, its authorities may feel that further development is unnecessary. Finally, temples that are privately owned are more interested in earning income for their owners rather than to improve the condition of the temples even though they may be dilapidated and need repairs badly.

3.4 Characteristics of the temples

3.4.1 Types of temples

The most likely criterion for allocating a temple to one type is the classification based on the enshrined deities. Sometimes there are no apparent problems involved, ie. many temples with enshrined Buddhist deities are in fact temples belonging to the orthodox Buddhist sects and are staffed by the Buddhist clergy. There are however other cases where the temples contain a mixture of a few religions. A strict or "pure"

Buddhist temple actually should not worship any deities other than the Buddhist, etc. However, in Malaysia, no rigid differentiation is made. A temple may start out as a pure Buddhist one but gradually, other deities may be included in order that more of the community may be accomodated. Hence, there is no temple which is pure Buddhist or Taoist or etc. as Buddhist deities can be found on Taoist altars and vice versa. But there is always a deity which is predominant and other "guest" deities which live peacefully under the same roof. Here, the classification of the temple to Buddhist, Taoist, etc is made on the basis of the main deity of the temple.

TABLE 3.3 : Types of temples

Types of temples	Number of temples
Buddhist	11
Taoist	16
'Sanyi Chiao'	1
'Chenk'ung Chiao'	1
Cult of Malaysian origin (ie. Sze Ya Nuew)	1
Total	30

3.4.2 Physical structure of the temples

From section 3.3.1, the development of temples vary causing a variation in their sizes and structures. Frequently, the temples are of one-building structure composing of either a hall or a few housing the deities. Most of them have small out-door shrines housing deities such as 'Toa Peh Kong', God of Wealth, etc. Other structures are the storage rooms, living quarters (for the resident monks or nuns, 'dangki', visiting monk ,etc.)

libraries containing religious materials such as sutras, mantras, scriptures, etc, classrooms to conduct evening language classes, an office with employed staff (part or full-time), meditation halls cum assembly cum activities halls where members can get together to read newspapers and often a few who get together fairly regularly for games of mahjong. Certain temples let out parts of their premises and the rents collected become part of their funds. For examples, Kuan Yin Sze (Birch Road) lets out the hut beside to a joss or incense maker; Choo Sing Tong rents out the left wing of its building to a kindergarden and in Sin Leng Muew, a Chinese couple rents one of its rooms.

A number of the temples visited have either a shrine or a hall dedicated to ancestral worship in which there is an altar with tiers of ascending wooden steps and on these steps are rows of spirit-tablets (see plate 3). Entry of a tablet into this shrine involves a monetary contribution paid once and the tablet sit on the altar forever. There is an exceptional case where after every 20 years, another amount must be paid or the tablet will be taken off but with the name of the owner entered into a huge mass board instead. The temple tends to arrange the tablets enshrined according to the amount of money contributed, with large contributors occupying the top few rows. Qualities and sizes of the tablets differ according to amount contributed too. A spirit-tablet has the full name of the deceased, dates of birth and death and very often, a photograph of the deceased displayed at the top of the tablet as well. There are also married couples occupying the same tablet itself.

In Tham Wah Wan and Kung Yim Kok, a statue of 'Ti Ts'ang Wang'

(Ksitigarbha: "the Bodhisattva of saving people in the world from hell"), is seen sitting on the altar or hall. He wears a crown and holds a staff in his right hand which is a weapon to open the door of Hell.

3.4.3 Architecture of the temples

> "Architectural characteristic of temples vary to some extent from place to place as China is large depending on the climate, availability of materials, etc...."[8]

As in Malaysia, the architecture depends more on the availability of funds as elaborate decorations are very expensive. Most of the temples, especially the new ones, are of simple architectural designs. One is no longer greeted by a typical Chinese temple with all its architectural splendour but by a moderate building that would hardly be taken for a temple at the first glance. However, most of the old temples are among the most impressive, decorative and elaborate temples which are easily distinguishable by their architectural styles (see plates 4 and 5).

The roof ornaments are not only the most obvious and important feature of a temple but it is also the most expensive ornamental element (plates 6 and 7). On these roofs, all kinds of objects can be seen. Roofs ridges usually adorn a pair of dancing dragons or phoenix, spanking a celestial blazing pearl, the ancient vase or a pagoda at the centre. Sometimes, figurines of warriors or deities are placed.[9] On the other hand, there are temples covered with plain roofs without any ridge decorations and roofs either in the form of tiles, asbestos sheets or metal sheets are numerous (plate 8). The entrance facade, archway or gateway is another impressive

feature with elaborate roof ridge. Entrance doors to the main hall are usually adorned with the paintings of the "door gods".[10] The main entrance might be guarded by a pair of lions, male and female, carved in marble, granite or stone. Dragons are entwined on granite pillars or circular columns. Others m ight be plain or inscribed with Chinese characters. Wall openings and windows are of various shapes, some casting creatures of good omen and geomantic signs like the 'pa-kua'(Eight Trigrams) and the 'yin-yang' principle (depicting mystical powers against evil forces). In Kong Hock Ting, the floor in the main hall is beautifully designed with tiles depicting colourful lotus flowers in full bloom. Others are of mosaic, terrazo, glazed tiles or simply plain cement.

3.4.4 Characteristics of the deities.

Deities are almost always portrayed as human configurations with outward appearances of a human being. Generally, such an effigy consists of a figure made of wood, clay, mud, bronze, etc. A flat, two-dimensional image may also depict a deity and even a Chinese character, written usually on a piece of red paper. Deities not portrayed in images are 'Natu kung', 'Chen k'ung chu' (founder of the Religion of the Void), etc. The images range from small and portable ones to life-sized set up permanently in fixed position. Often, there are additional smaller duplicates which can be carried outside.[11] The images are displayed in niches or ornamental altars(plate 9). Many deities usually accumulation of gifts made to the temple over a number a years, may be placed at one altar but the one placed at the central position is regarded as the main deity. Occasionally, there are side altars or altars in adjoining rooms.

Most deities bear a number of titles or names, especially among devotees of different dialect groups and this make the task of identifying a deity considerably more difficult. For example, the deity 'Fachu kung' is known as 'Zhang Gong Sheng Jun' among the Cantonese; 'Tien Hou' as known in general, is also known by the names 'Ma-tsu p'o', 'Tien Shang Sheng Mu', 'Ku-tsu p'o' by different groups.

Among the 30 temples visited, 8 are dedicated to 'Kuan Yin'. The popularity of 'Kuan Yin' indicates that she ranks above the Buddhas (eg. Sakyamuni and Amitabha) among the worshippers even though she is only a Bodhisattva. 'Kuan Yin' has many different forms, either a male or female depending upon the situation and environment. The most popular form is the 'White-robed Kuan Yin' holding a willow twig (willow symbolizes purity and the vase symbolizes purifying) and a vase. The other forms are the 'Thousand Hand Kuan Yin' (plate 10), the 'Child Sending Kuan Yin', the 'Fish Basket Kuan Yin', etc.

3.4.5 A general description of the temples

There are certain fundamental ideas of religious ornamentations and equipments. Outside a temple, one finds a a concrete furnace in which worshippers burn large wads of incense papers as offerings to the deities. Inside, there is a variety of standardized receptacles and implements for holding oil lamps, candles, joss sticks and Chinese lanterns elaborately painted hanging from the roofs. On the offering tables are wooden fishes ('mu yu'), chimes("ch'ing"), bells and drums,etc used and sounded during daily or festive rituals and during the recitations of the Buddhist sutras

and texts. The buildings might be decorated with auspicious inscriptions or calligraphic works which may be carved in stone; lacquered works painted on woods or boards or written strips of papers depending ontheir wealth. Also found are embroidered silk banners and scrolls proclaiming the names of the temples and dieties or quotations from holy scriptures. Buddhist temples might include murals and paintings depicting religious scenes or deities. Huge paintings of 'Ssu Tien Wang'(the 4 Deva Kings) can be found in Yuan Thong Sze and Hsing Leng Sze. The former also displays the various paintings of Kuan Yin in the different forms. Other paintings are mostly connected with the stories of Buddha, particularly with regard to his miracles,eg. as using his hand to move a large heavy rock, taming a wild elephant or depicting the "Ten Courts of Hell" to remind devotees to repent and to avoid criminal and immoral actions.

Most temples have instruments of divination such as the 'mu pei' (divination blocks) and the bamboo vases containing sets of divination sticks.[12] Spirit-medium temples will display equipments for the "dangki's" self-mortification and performances. Good deeds of Buddhist monks during the past, eg. in releasing animals in distress along the roads, are still being practised at present by some Buddhist temples. Instead, they have a pond within the temple for"releasing" animals such as fishes, tortoises,etc in Hock Teik Tong and in Kuan Yin Tong(Jalan Ampang).

It should be noted that most of the equipments, implements and others are donated by devotees either in expectation of or in return for favours granted by the deities, Besides these, other donations are silk vestments for the deities, dishes for the offerings of food, prayer stools

wherethe devotees kneel down in front of the deities and prostrate themselves and so on, often inscribed with the names of the temples, deities, the benefactors and sometimes the dates as well. Popular Buddhist temples might include a pair of huge lamps of "the Buddha of Medicine". In each niche of the lamp, there is a small image of the Buddha and a small light bulb. Each donor has his name written below each niche. Three temples have these huge lamps and they are Tham Wah Wan (a pair of 7-storey lamps), Kong Hock Ting and Kung Yim Kok (both are of more than 7-storey). Besides these, stone tablets or plaques recording the establishment and the names of donors are displayed conspicuously, normally at the entrances.

In the main hall, there is a table or counter at which the temple-keeper or owner sits to receive contributions from the devotees and to sell them paraphernelia of worship such as candles, joss sticks, charms and so on as they may require.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. Middlebrook, "Yap Ah Loy", Journal of Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. 24, Part 2, 1951; p. 8.

2. Yap Ah Loy, a leader in the Chinese community, an administrator and a mining magnate in Kuala Lumpur, contributed enormously to the making of modern Kuala Lumpur. He arrived in the year 1854 and died in 1885. Ibid., p. 5.

3. It was a common practice for the Chinese immigrants to the Nanyang to take a handful of ash from the incense burner in their native temple or to make crude carvings of deities as a protection against evil spirits which they were bound to encounter in their new country. After their arrival, these relics were placed in their new homes and in the course of time, temples were built to facilitate their worship. It was this way that the religious practices and worship of well-known deities in China were perpetuated; Moese, op. cit., p. 346.

4. Baity, "Religion In A Chinese Town", Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs, Vol. 64, 1975; pp. 25, 135.

5. A dialect, clan or district group usually dominates an area which all other groups are significantly under-represented; Cf. Moese, op. cit., p.168

6. Cf. O'Hara, "Research On Changes of Chinese Society", Asian Folklore & Social Life Monographs, Vol. 20, 1971; p. 93.

7. Middlebrook, op. cit., pp. 21-23.

8. Lip, E. (1981), "Chinese Temples & Deities", Times Book International, Singapore; p. 40.

9. For an account and analysis of temples architecture, and their symbols, see Lip; Ibid.

10. It is a traditional practice for Chinese temples to print or paint on their doors paintings of traditional "door gods". The costs have risen tremendously and artisans are difficult to obtain nowadays. Few can afford to paint them now. Lip; ibid.; p. 96.

11. If someone is sick, permission may be obtained from the temple to take one of these small statues home to worship in order to help the patient to recover. The statue must be returned to the temple within a certain time.

12. To obtain answers from the deity, the blocks are thrown on the floor, with the devotee kneeling and praying. If one lands with the convex side up and the other with the concave side down, the answer is positive. If both land with the same side, the answer is negative.
To use the divination sticks, the supplicant shakes the vase until one of the sticks falls out. The number on the stick corresponds to the number on a fortune strip on a board on the side wall. These strips are printed with a verse each in classical Chinese. Fortunes can be interpreted with the aid of a small hand book kept usually in consultation with the temple caretaker. The subject matter of a strip is sufficiently general to allow for a wide range of questions and answers.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE TEMPLES

4.1 Religious specialists

According to C.K.Yang,

> "The lack of widespread scientific knowledge to enlighten the populace regarding the cause and effect of physical and social phenomena has caused people to use magic practices, not so much because of their proven effectiveness but because of their psychological stimulations of hope and confidence at times when the best of human efforts was uncertain of success in surmounting a situation. The more the difficulty, the more were the people driven to magic and religions. The poorer the class, the more superstitious are its members."[1]

Hence, if a temple is to establish a good reputation and enjoy success, it must obtain the services of a religious specialist who can attract worshippers to the temple. Once successful, sometimes it is not even considered necessary to retain him. But in many cases, religious specialists are called in on special occasions only, for example, on the festive days. For the rest of the time, the temple is in the charge of a caretaker who has no specialised knowledge beyond the ability to cope with few simple duties.

Vivienne Wee defined a religious specialist as :-

> "...a person who provides various types of religious services to the general laity and who mediates in one way or another between them and the source of power..."[2]

The most clearly defined categories of religious specialists are the Buddhist monks and nuns, Taoist priests and mediums ('dangki'), but there is, in addition a very wide range of other specialists such as the geomancers, fortune-tellers, etc.

4.2 Taoist priests

Unlike the Buddhist priests who are ordained clergy of a canonical religion, the Taoist priests either received formal ordinations or none at all. The latter gain their status by serving an apprenticeship of a few years under a Taoist master which then entitles them to the membership in a local Taoist organization. An example is the Chong Shing Thong temple which used to train priests part-time under its chief priest. The apprentices held fulltime secular jobs and were trainedd mostly in the evenings. However, this practice has come to an end now in which the last group of priests was trained about 20 years ago. There was no one to replace the chief priest and few people were eager to learn nowadays.

These Taoist priests lead a secular life. They do not shave their heads and they eat meat, marry and live at home and among the people. Most of them have secular jobs and conduct rites of various kinds on request such as in temples, at funerals and so on. They don their Taoist gowns only when their religious services are required in which they can be contacted through the temples, undertakers, coffin-shops and so on. They either practice their "magical trade" alone or in groups which is the common case. The priests in Chong Shing Thong are engaged in a group of three or more,

led by a chief priest. The 'hung pao' received for their services is then divided onthe basis of two parts for the chief and one part each for the assistant priests and the temple. For example, if the group consists of three priests, the chief will receive a portion equivalent to 2/5, and 1/5 each to the other two priests and the temple.

4.3 Buddhist clergy

Being celibate and vegetarian, the Buddhist clergy is regarded as the best guardians of a temple's purity. They either have their own temples or are hired as caretakers to take charge of the temple's affairs. These resident specialists act as caretakers, keeping the temples clean and in good order.

4.3.1 The background of the Buddhist clergy

According to the study made by Moese Wolfgang, majority of the monks in Malaysia were ordained at monasteries in North Fuhkien, China, mostly from the Hsing-hua prefecture.[3] They are part of the migrant population that came to Nanyang (South seas) either because of the Sino-Japanese War or because of the Communist takeover in 1949.[4] Most of them are in their 50s 60s now and unless there is an influx of monks from Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc, the number of monks in Malaysia is likely to decrease in the coming years.

The life of a monk (or nun) is regulated very strictly. He must observe celibacy, shave his head, be a vegetarian and is restricted in his choice of clothing:- grey-brown clothes for daily use, yellow robes for ceremonies.

Buddhist monks and nuns are members of certain sects.[5] Among these sects (or schools), the Pure Land sect (Ch'ing Toh) predominates in Malaysia. Even some of the Ch'an temples or monks are practicing the joint-practice of Ch'an and Ch'ing Toh, as in Hoeh Beng Temple where the temple follows the ideas of the Ch'an school but practise those of Ch'ing Toh. Elements of these two different schools can be detected easily.

TABLE 4.1 : Buddhist sects in some Kuala Lumpur temples

Types of sect	Number of temples
Ch' ing Toh	5
Ch'an	1
Joint-practice of Ch'an and Ch'ing Toh	1
None	3 *
Type unknown	1 **
Total	11

Notes:- *two of the temples belong to the laity, not following any sect while the other one used to follow the Ch'an sect.

**the resident nun was not present at times of interviews.

Ch'ing Toh, the most influential and popular sect among the people is considered the most simple to follow, ie. salvation through faith in Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha of the Western Paradise. All who call upon Amitabha by reciting constantly the expression, "Nanmo omi t'ofo"(which means "I devote myself entirely to Amitabha") will be reborn in the Western Paradise (Nirvana). However, even though Amitabha is the main deity in this school, he is not so popular among the worshippers. Kuan Yin, junior to him in status (only a Bodhisattva) is more superior in regard of popularity.

The resident monks and nuns who own the temples are not subordinates to anyone and they are free to run the religious and economic affairs of their temples as they wish. Despite this, associations are formed but are in no way interfere with the operation of the temples. Thus, these Buddhist temples and monks are linked to one another through their associations in which the members are made up either of religious specialists, the laity or a combination of both. Examples of these associations are the Malaysian Buddhist Association, the Young Buddhist Association, Mui Hong Association, etc.[6] These associations are largely responsible for the preservation of the Buddhist faith in the midst of modern life. Some of these commanded considerable funds and were active in many kinds of charitable acts. During important meetings held by them, the monks of the temples will leave their temples to be in the charge of their subordinates while they attend these meetings. Newsletters are sent frequently by the associations to inform the monks and members of the associations' affairs. Buddhist periodicals in several languages are published and distributed to the members and public.

4.3.2 Functions of the monks

Unlike past monks, the monks of today are not involved greatly in the preaching of Buddhist doctrines. Besides performing their daily rituals and rites, their function is restricted to the rendering of various religious services to private individuals and groups. These include consultations concerning illness, personal problems, auspicious dates, fortune-reading based on the reading of 'tong shu', ie, the "Book of Everything"), services for the dead (conducting funerals, death anniversaries and so on), conducting praying ceremonies during temple festivals, conducting opening ceremonies

of temples and firms and so on. They are regarded as "teachers" to an unlearned laity, not on theology but questions directed concern rituals and rites or the proper way to conduct them. Their practices in this modern period are a paying trade. Thus, some priests have managed to command a wide patronage for their temples to the extent that some were even able to purchase some properties or assets (such as cars, houses and so on) which generate incomes for them (eg. rentals). One of the monks interviewed is a dealer in the religious paraphernalia business. His temple becomes the venue for his business transactions and also acts as a storehouse.

4.3.3 Other occupants in the temples

Most temples have no more than one resident monk. Those having a few are rare. Some Buddhist temples do not have any at all.

Most monks and nuns have a few disciples serving an apprenticeship under them and some of them were even sent to Taiwan or other countries for training or for a short course under a famous abbot. These disciples live in the same temple with their master. Besides these disciples, there are also some orphans (mostly girls) living in the temples. Few of them receive formal education while most of them were only taught how to read the Buddhist sutras or scriptures in order to become monks or nuns themselves. There might also be one or a few 'chai-ku'(vegetarian ladies) living in the temple. They are a form of laynun who do not shave their heads but they observe the rules of celibacy and vegetarianism. Most of them have a master-disciple relationship with the chief monk or nun with whom they

have taken the "Three Refuges" and the "Five Vows", ie. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; not to kill, steal, lie, drink alcoholic beverage or commit any immoral sexual act.

Old folks (especially women) who have no family and are related to the temples (exhelpers, friends of monk and so on) also dwell in the temples where they help the monk or nun with simple tasks. Resident monk without any helpers will hire domestic servants to help them to maintain the temples. Some of these helpers work as volunteers and will not accept money if it is offered to them.

Most priests showed little eagerness in propagating their skills, which are always kept secrets. Those who transmit their skills to their disciples will hand the responsibilities of looking after the temples to them after their death. Those without any disciple will simply choose one of the occupants in the temple to take over the duties as the chief, as in Kuan Yin Thong (Jalan Ampang). However, with no one to take over the responsibilities of managing the temple, the temple (a private one) may be converted into a public one with the formation of a temple committee. There are cases where the late monk has sold his temple to an outsider (either a monk or just a laity) instead.

4.4 Spirit-mediums

The Buddhist and Taoist priests are indirect religious specialists in which the supplicant is not brought into direct, first-hand contact with

the deities or spirits and they have no power of mediumship. The best that they can do is to drive the evil spirits away. A.J.A.Elliott defined spirit-mediumship as :-

> "a spiritual being of vast and undefined powers possesses the body of a human medium and enables him to inflick injury upon himself without feeling pain and to speak with divine wisdom, giving advice to worshippers and curing their illness."[7]

The most widely used term for a medium is the Hokkien term 'dangki', meaning 'divining youth'. Hence, it is not unusual to find child mediums. In fact, most of the adult 'dangki' started out on their religious career in their childhood. Another kind of medium which is different from the temple medium or 'dangki' is the cult of soul-raising specialists known in Cantonese as 'Man Mai Poh' or in Hokkien as 'Khan-bong' (meaning "to bring up the dead"), This type of medium is believed to have the ability to communicate with spirits of the dead and they preferably perform in private homes. The clientele, mostly females, are persons who are anxious to find out about the welfare of beloved ones who have passed away.

4.4.1 The practices of a 'dangki'

There are two ways in which a person can become a 'dangki'. One is by the will of a deity where he may be "caught" spontaneously. This happens especially during a religious celebration in a temple where the "gifted" person suddenly enters a trance. This type of 'dangki' are those people fated to have short lives but whose departure is delayed because

one of the 'shen' wants his body for a time as a medium between itself and the human beings.[8] Thus, mediumship has lengthened their lives. The second type of 'dangki' needs not wait for the deity to choose him specifically. He voluntarily trains himself for spirit-mediumship by learning the techniques of mediumship from a master. The master will guide him onto the proper path of mediumship besides conducting a kind of ritual or invocation to invite and bring the 'shen' to the 'dangki'. Among the things that he has to learn are how to diagnose illnesses and prescribe Chinese medicine and 'fu' and so on other than learning the proper techniques for communicating with the deities.

In theory, anyone can become a 'dangki' but certain groups of people however are considered more likely than others to become 'dangki'. Youths under the age of 20 years old are most suitable candidates and this is how the term 'dangki' came about. Males are more likely to become 'dangki' as the 'shen' seldom want to descend into the female bodies which are considered impure, saved under exceptional cases.

There is no theorectical limit to the number of deities that may use a 'dangki's' body. He may be possessed by different deities and thus exhibiting the characteristics of the deities not in looks but in behaviour. For example, a 'dangki' possessed by the Monkey God will peer into the distance with his right hand shading his eyes. Different tones of speech and different dialects are also used for different deities.

There are cases where a residential 'dangki's' home has been

converted into a temple. This happens when the 'dangki' has gained a good reputation among the people for many oracular hints and has attracted many supporters and rich donors who later established a temple for his practice. One such example is the 'dangki' in Ong Boon Fu who is also the only female temple 'dangki' that the writer has come across(residential female 'dangki' are plenty) in her study. The 'dangki', a Hokkien lady from China, is about 60years old and is very popular among the Hokkien devotees. There were also a few regular non-Chinese supporters who donated some equipments to the temple. The 'dangki' has shifted a number of times, operating as a residential 'dangki'. The present site, occupied since early 70s, was originally a small hut and was expanded and renovated into a temple later on.

It is easy to distinguish a temple with a 'dangki' attached to it. Some of the following items may be seen in the temple:- a black flag hanging outside the temple depicting the Eight-trigrams (pa Kua) in yellow gold which is a potent force against evil spirits (see plate 11) and smaller versions of the flag for use by the 'dangki'; a Dragon throne in which the 'dangki' sits in meditation in front of the 'shen' ; a chair lined with sharp nails on which sits the 'dangki' who is carried in triumphant procession through the streets; a vicious looking "spike-ball"; swords; a whip; battle-axes and so on which the 'dangki' uses for self-mortification acts; a set of skewers for his cheeks and tongue; Chinese sedan chairs or tillers to carry the deities in the procession; the "automatic-writing" stick and so on. Most temples only display the 'dangki's' table with tools like Chinese brushes and ink, strips of yellow papers or ready printed 'fu', seals to stamp on items brought by the supplicants, etc.

4.4.2 Consultations

In a temple, consultations are held either daily or only during festive days. As for the daily consultations, either the 'dangki' is available the whole day whenever there are clients or seances take place only during the evenings and weekends. The former is normally the temple's caretaker also while the latter holds a fulltime secular job, devoting only the evenings and weekends to this spare-time and part-time practice.

For small intimate gatherings which concern day-to-day activity of the cult, the seances are carried out in the main hall of the temple. But, if the gathering is rather too large, it is carried out under the porch with onlookers watching from the outside of the temple. For great occasions, then the 'dangki' performs outside in the open space in front of the temple.

Consultations concern a variety of matters in which cases involving sickness and disease undoubtedly occur most frequent. The aim of these consultations is to obtain help from the deities for the supplicants when modern medicine has failed and could not determine the nature of the cause. The 'dangki' is also consulted when it is indicated that it is caused by harmful spirits. Young children are considered particularly susceptible to troublesome spirits. Generally, a"medical recipe" or 'fu' (written oracle) is issued and the supplicants are given instructions as to what to do with it when they get home. In certain cases, a medical prescription is dictated by the 'shen' personally and the supplicant is

at liberty to take it to any Chinese herbalist.

Consultations also concern misfortunes and family troubles, auspicious dates, business advices and so on. Some supplicants bring along with them a variety of items such as statues of deities, household ornaments and articles of clothing to be consecrated in the temples in which the temple's seals are used to stamp on them.

The majority of the supplicants are women, as indeed are the majority of temple worshippers. The clientele is not restricted to any special dialect group. Most of them are of the poorer class, illiterate, conservative but it is not unusual to find supplicants of well-to-do families or even English and well-educated consulting the 'dangki' or attending the seances. The problems may be raised or consulted on behalf of other persons and are not confined to a single subject only as the supplicants apt to pour out a string of troubles to them.

Some 'dangki' are considered very efficacious and their credibility as 'dangki' grew and has drawn a great clientele that it is necessary for the supplicants to register their names and the subjects for consultations beforehand in order that everybody may duly have his turn. Regarding the extent to which advice and prescriptions received do in fact result in cures, those who do not return can certainly not be taken to mean that cure has been effected. For some when the treatment has failed and they want a change in prescriptinn, they will return to the 'dangki'.

The 'dangki' deserves a renumeration which is duly paid out by the supplicants. The 'dangki' either keeps these or they are handed to the temple in cases when the 'dangki' is already being paid a wage by the temple (he is merely an employee of the temple).

The 'dangki' either practices alone or in a group in which he depends to a considerable extent upon the retention of the services and the cooperation of a number of persons familiar with the rites. Most of his assistants help directly in the rites in which a few are frequently seen to conjure the deities into the 'dangki' by chanting invocations. There are also interpreters at his elbow to translate his mutterings into a dialect intelligible to the supplicants. They alone can understand these "strange" languages of the deities through their experiences and exercises. They also translate questiona of non-Chinese speaking supplicants to the 'dangki'. These assistants must be familiar with the ways of the 'dangki' in which they will provide equipments that the 'dangki' may require and fulfilling other such duties as may be demanded. They are made up mostly of the temple's committee members.

4.4.3 Description of a seance

The style of performance varies from a 'dangki' to another and daily performance differs greatly from the festive ones. The daily performance is normally less elaborate and seldom displays gruelling self-mortification feats as compared to the public festive ones. This section deals with daily consultations only.

The 'dangki' usually begins by chanting an invocation in order to invite the 'shen' or by murmuring a prayer with his arms resting on the table and his head on his arms as if falling asleep. The invocation is a formula professedly uttered once upon a time by the 'shen' himself through the mouth of the 'dangki' with an additional promise to come whenever he hears it. Some 'dangki' switch on taped recordings of their personal invocation and merely listen to them. The 'dangki' then starts to be in a trance; he yawns, burps or moans in a loud voice, shaking his limbs, head and body. Every now and then, he hits the table-top with his fist. As the incantation proceeds, suddenly he jumps up and dances in a delirious state. His eyes are half-opened with only the whites showing. The supplicant begins to ask questions and leans forward to hear the answer given by the low or sometimes falsetto voice. The 'shen' speaks in a strange way which the supplicant does not understand and the 'dangki's' assistant interprets it for her. Later, the 'dangki' draws wriggly lines vigorously with a Chinese brush and Chinese vermilion ink (either black or red in colour) on strips of yellow papers and on some incense papers which is not easily deciphered. The moment comes when the 'shen' announces his intention to depart. After his recovery, the 'dangki' has not the slightest idea or recollection of what has occured to him a while ago.[9]

Most people prefer the speaking type of 'dangki'. One can also receive messages of the deity by another method, ie. through "automatic-writing", a form of non-verbal divination in which the spirits use a forked branch or instrument to write with (see Chapter 2, Note 6). This method of mediumship is performed also in temples of the 'Sanyi Chiao' cult. The only

'Sanyi Chiao' temple which the writer has come across ie. Chong Shing Thong, usedto have this practice in the temple daily. However, the 'dangki', who is still in the temple and acts as the temple-keeper now, is getting too old to practise this "automatic-writing" cult which is considered to be a tough and "dangerous" divination. This is the reason why few 'dangki' ever take up this cult. The writing instrument can still be seen resting on the offering table in front of the main altar in Chong Shing Thong.

The practice of spirit-mediumship has declined enormously. According to A.J.A.Elliott, it is possible that the practice of the cult itself may contain the seed of its own decline. The masters are often unwilling to reveal the whole extent of their knowledge to their pupils.[10] Influence of modern education and the tendency to accept Western medication have also reduced its popularity. Another reason is the lack newcomers to this cult as revealed through the small number of young 'dangki' or even new ones and the fact that most practices in the temples have come to an end when the existing 'dangki' passed away. Their substitutes are hard to find. Hence, these temples have to end the cult of spirit-mediumship in the temple unless a substitute can be found. Another problem faced is if the temple is owned by the 'dangki'. When the 'dangki' passed away, his temple will either be run by his family, sold to an outsider, or turned into a public temple with the formation of a committee and etc.

4.5 Temple Committee

Normally, a public temple has an organized group of persons with elected heads for each sub-committee and with designated responsibilities,

such as Chairman, Secretary, Auditor and numerous other committee members. They are made up of those people religiously devoted, dedicated and committed to the events and the affairs of their temples. If a temple is dominated by a certain group (clan, district or dialect), the committee will then be dominated by the people coming from the same group. The committee is also made up of people well-known, wealthy and trusted in the community and those contributors who have given large sums of money to the establishment and construction of the temple . These people are frequently elected to fill the top posts in the committee. Besides religiously devoted, these people are trying to do something for the good of their community in addition to bolstering their own prestige and they are all volunteers.

One of the reasons why it is better to have rich and wealthy persons as heads of the committee is to avoid the temple's funds from being embezzled. In spite of an elaborate accounting system for the money and funds collected and spent,the most typical accusation is that someone has embezzled the funds. These are individuals who are simply concerned with the making of as large a profit as possible for themselves and for their clique. Another reason is that it is better to have someone with wider connections outside the temple and community who can use his connections to raise more money for the temple so as to be able to put on elaborate entertainment during the temple's festivals.

The important task of the committee is to manage the temple's financial resources. This board of management is also responsible for the maintenance and the necessary repairs of the temple and they are to obtain

adequate resources for larger renovations, usually through a special fund-raising drive.

The committee is normally elected on the last day of the main festival, few years once. Names of persons willing to stand for election are read out one by one in front of the main deity. After each name, the divination blocks are thrown and the person receiving the greatest number of affirmative answer will become the next President and so on. However, most of the temples today select their committee by casting votes among their supporters. Generally, the same committee remains unchanged for years.

Most of the committee members do not visit their temples very often. They only come to the temple during festivals and meetings held to discuss the celebration of a festival. On the 1st and the 15th day of each lunar month, most of them visit the temple and pray to the deities. Other than these occasions, the temple is in the charge of a live-in temple-keeper. If the temple is a big establishment, then the committee might employ persons such as general clerks, gardeners, "jaga" (watch-man) and so on full-time or part-time.

4.6 Temple-keeper

Anyone can qualify for the role of a temple-keeper who is usually hired full-time. In most private temples, the temple's proprietor is simultaneously its caretaker. In others, the management hire a temple-keeper or maybe even a few. There are also persons who assume this role voluntarily without any renumeration. Most of these temple-keepers live in the temple

as well. There are also some full-time hired temple-keepers who do not live in. These are especially those who are married in which they will return to their homes at the end of the day.

A temple-keeper's role is the symbolic patronage and total devotion of a person to the temple and the deities. His duties are to worship the temple deities with incense twice daily. He is responsible for the everyday operations of the temple. He cleans the niches and the altars of the deities, performs simple religious acts and services or assists the devotees who come to worship and to ask for their fortune (through divination sticks) in the temple.

The temple-keeper is a man to whom monetary contributions are paid to the temple by the worshippers. Therefore, his status is sometimes more than that of a mere employee. Often, he is the actual owner of the temple or at least closely associated with him by ties of kinship. But when the temple is a public one and to ensure an adequate income from the worshippers reaching the temple, it is better to appoint the temple-keeper as decided by tenders published in local Chinese newspapers. The temple in such a case is leased out by tender to an individual and having raised such a high bid to secure the post, the individual (ie. the temple-keeper) will do his best to bring back as much profits as he can from the temple's worshippers. One of the guaranteed sources of income to him is the "oil money" (money collected from 'xiang you') collected from the worshippers. Worshippers who enter the temple always head towards the temple-keeper or his counter to give him a small sum (sometimes big) whereupon the latter,

often just as a symbolic gesture, pours some oil on the lamps and thereby announces to the deities that the worshippers have come to worship them. Before filling the lamp, the bell or drum is sounded, followed by a cry of 'xiang you!' (meaning to put oil in the lamps). The 'xiang you' or"oil money" is just a gesture to ensure that the oil lamps in the temple will continue to burn. Other than this, sometimes the temple-keeper interprets the fortune strips, chosen by the fall of a fortune stick and since the strip is regarded as efficacious, the worshipper often likes to contribute some money to the temple or to pay for the temple-keeper's service of interpreting the strip in the form of an 'hong pao' (a red packet containing some money) or cash. In some cases, the temple-keeper also acts as a 'dangki' and therewith has access to an additional source of income.

It should be noted that if the temple-keeper is hired, the contributions to the temple should be put into the temple's charity-box and they belong to the temple. However, it is hard to stop the temple-keeper from embezzling the temple's funds for his personal use [illegible]. This is because contributions (daily ones) to the temple are not recorded instantly and no receipt is being issued to the contributor unless requested to do so. Moreover, he holds the key to the counter.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Yang, op. cit., p.1

2. Wee, op. cit., p.54.

3. Moese, op. cit., p.307.

4. Wee, op. cit., p.165.

5. Originally, Buddhism was divided into two schools:- Hinayana (or Theravada) and Mahayana. In China, it developed further into various schools such as Pure Land (Ch'ing Toh), Ch'an (Hrdaya), Hua Yen, Tien Tai, San Lun Tsung (school of the Three Sastras), Vinaya (Lu Tsung), Cheng Shih (True success), Chu She (school of Reality), Tzu En and Mi Tsung (school of True Word). See Hsu Yun, 1956, "Buddhism and the Ch'an school of China", Indo-Chinese Literature Publications; p. 5; and Comber, op. cit., p. 47.

6. Most of these associations serve to promote Buddhism. Thet organize Buddhist classes and invite local and occasionally foreign monks and Buddhist scholars to give lectures and talks. The Mui Hong Association is only opened to monks of the 'Hsing-hua' dialect or monks originating from the 'Hsing-hua' prefecture of the 'Fuhkien' province in China.

7. Elliott, op. cit., p.1. This book by Elliott provides a detailed description of the cult of spirit-mediumship.

8. DeGroot, J.J.M., 1910, "The Religious System of China", Vol.6, E.J. Brill, Leyden, p. 1272.

9. After 30 years of mediumship, a 'dangki' can retain consciousness while being possessed. Wee, op. cit., p. 199.

10. Elliott, op. cit., p. 168.

CHAPTER FIVE

CELEBRATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

5.1 Celebrations

On ordinary days, most of the temples are usually empty, some with an occasional worshipper coming in to pray. This does not mean that these temples are falling into disuse as all of them are well-patronized during the Chinese religious festivals that occur during the Chinese calendrical year.

During festivals, worshippers visit the temples to make their offerings to the deities. They attract many worshippers, not only regular ones of the temples but also those from the nearby towns or even those from far away. It should also be noted that some of the fine old buildings are infrequently visited by worshippers while other little huts are swarming with activities on the popular festive days. The popularity of a temple is determined by a number of factors. One of them is the power of the deities in the temple to attract worshippers which is determined by their reputed efficaciousness in answering prayers and in bringing miraculous benefits to these worshippers. Other factors are the good reputation of the owner, the temple management and the ease of access to the temple. Hence, for a popular temple, the number of worshippers may easily run into thousands during a festival.

Generally, a temple is frequented mostly by the female worshippers. On the other hand, during festivals, majority of the helpers and

organizers are males, consisting mainly of volunteers. These people frequently assist and help to make the festivals successful as a service to the deities and monetary rewards are not necessary.

A notable feature during temple festivals is that, normally there is a series of flags, triangular in shape, leading to the temple which are put up by the roadside. These flags bear the name of the temple, the names of the deities enshrined there and so on and they act as important advertisements for the temple, especially if the temple is situated in a remote or isolated place (see plate 12). Besides this, all available space in the vicinity of the temple will be taken up by hawkers' stalls.

5.1.1 Types of celebration

In practice, hardly a day passes without some kind of religious celebration in the Chinese calendar. The Chinese pantheon of deities and celebrations are numerous but relatively few can be regarded as national or universal festivals in which all Chinese devotees participate. Majority of these are of a local or personal nature. These festivals are either celebrated domestically or in temples.

The Chinese consider the 1st and the 15th day of each lunar month as auspicious and their domestic altars and the temples' are always thickly lit with joss-sticks and incense on these days. In most temples, coil-shape joss or incense with a strip of paper each bearing the name of the suppliant, are seen hanging from the ceilings of these temples (see plate 13).

Generally, the main celebration of a temple is to celebrate the birthday of its main deity, followed by birthdays of other important deities in the temple. Although an occasion is labelled as a "birthday", it does not mean that the deity is actually born on that day. Sometimes, the "label" is used as an analogy, rather than as a true label, to indicate a festive celebration.[1] Hence, some deities have a few "birthdays" in a year. For example, 'Kuan Yin' is honoured for her birthday on the 19th day of the 2nd, 6th and 9th lunar months.

Most temples celebrate birthdays of deities enshrined there only. However, most of them also celebrate birthday of universal or national deities such as that of 'Yu Huang Shang Ti' (Jade Emperor) on the 9th of the 1st lunar month. Besides these birthdays, most temples also observe and celebrate other national festivals such as 'Chap Goh Mei (H)' as on the 15th day of the 1st moon (ie. to mark the end of the Chinese New Year celebration), 'Ch'ing Ming', the Hungry Ghosts Festival (or the All Souls Day) as on the 15th day of the 7th month and so on.

These universal festivals are celebrated by most Chinese devotees, either domestically or at the temples. For example, during the "Hungry Ghosts Festival", Buddhist temples take their masses for the dead seriously, a ceremony known as 'Ta chai'. The dead spirits are regarded as trouble-makers and if offerings are not given to them by the living beings, they will pester and disturb them. Besides providing their own ancestors with food, clothings and other resources, they will also feed and sacrify to other homeless hungry spirits when they are released from

the "Otherworld" in search of food during this period (the 7th lunar month).[2] Most Buddhist priests will conduct rites and services for all these spirits which serve to draw them away from the bad steps in which they were engaged and also to drag them finally out of Hell. These 'Ta chai' ceremonies may also be performed at other times, in most cases on the birthday and death anniversary of the deceased.

The most important and enthusiastic festival of the Buddhist devotees is Vesak Day, known also as "the Thrice Sacred Day", ie. to commemorate the three great events : the birth, the Enlightenment and the passing away of Gautama Buddha (known also as Sakyamuni Buddha). It is celebrated on the full-moon day in the month of May. Buddhist temples enshrining Sakyamuni Buddha as their main deity have a large celebration which includes the ritual washing of the Buddha image (which reenacted the first service performed for the new-born child). Another feature for celebrating the occasion is a parade of floats, contributed by some Buddhist temples and associations.

Other than the above celebrations, other types of celebration that can be found in a temple are the anniversary of the temple's establishment, Memorial Day for its founder(s) and so on.

5.1.2 Scale of celebration

The scale of celebration differs from one temple to another. If the temple is small and unpopular, it will only be a one-day celebration

with worshippers flocking to the temple to pray and no other event. If the temple has a religious specialist (eg. monk, nun or 'dangki'), he might conduct a religious service for the worshippers for 'p'ing an' (peace and health). On the other hand, if the temple is very popular, the celebration might be on a lavish scale, going on for a few days involving a sequence of events such as theatrical plays, a procession, a fire-walking ceremony and so on. The birthday of the main deity in the temple will be celebrated most elaborately.

The scale upon which the occasions are celebrated may also varies from year to year depending on a few criteria, mainly upon the amount of money that can be collected for the occasion. If the temple has more money, it can sponsor more entertainments. With less money, some of the activities may have to be cut.

Before a festival, some temples send out promoters to collect donations for the celebration. Most of the people approached will not be able to attend the festival in the temple but they still continue to contribute to demonstrate their faith in the deity. All contributors are given a properly printed and signed receipt. As the time of the festival draws nearer, some temples display the names of the contributors and the amount given on a large sheet of red paper outside or on the doors of the temples. During the festive days, there will also be a few promoters busily attending to the crowd of worshippers who have come to pray and to contribute to the temple. In return, a strip of paper (usually pink in colour) bearing the name of the contributor and the amount contributed is given and

displayed in the temple compound (the receipt is issued for a minimum sum contributed only).

Hence, the funds of the temple are swelled on these occasions by donations, purchases of 'fu' (talisman), incense and so on. Some temples also allow the worshippers to borrow money from the deity or temple (eg. Kau Ong Yah temple in Jalan Ampang which is not included in the sample taken for this study). The supplicants promise to return twice (or even more) the amount borrowed (the maximum amount that can be borrowed is very low, eg. $5 per person). Such money is believed to help a man to prosper and it is another way of earning more money by the temple (when they return the amount borrowed plus a"bonus" or "interest"). These temples must take precaution against "swindlers" whereby the supplicant must first show a receipt issued by the temple for his donation to the festival.

The time of the celebration can also influence the scale of the celebration. If the festival falls on a weekend or a public holiday, more worshippers are able to attend . If it falls on a working day, the temple will be less crowded. Thus the festival will be celebrated less elaborately.

Another criterion for the scale of celebration is the possibility of obtaining a police permit in order to make the necessary arrangements - the permit for the theatrical performances, the procession, the house-to-house collection of funds and so on. In the past, religious practices had been almost completely tolerated by the government. Only in later years have governmental interferences occurred and become more considerable with

restrictions upon processions and large gatherings. The restrictions were imposed in cause of public order and traffic control and they had to be increased since the year 1948 on the account of the state of emergency in our country.[3]

The time and the date for every event of the celebration is consulted through divination blocks. However, if a 'dangki' is available, the deity itself will choose the auspicious time through the 'dangki'. The festival's programme or events are planned and fixed by the temple committee if the temple is run by one. The committee will hold meetings to discuss these weeks or months before the celebration.

5.1.3 Methods of celebration

Even though the celebration of a festival differs from one temple to another, several common elements and events are to found. Worshippers will flock to the temple to pay homage to the deity.[4] A forest of incense sticks and candles is seen sending up its smoke in front of the altar while the furnace outside is tightly jammed with ashes and the smouldering remains of incense burnt by the worshippers. The offering table is piled high with gifts of fruits and food offerings such as pork, chickens, dried vegetables, wine (or Chinese tea), candies or large sacrifices which include the whole pig and goat, etc.[5] (see plate 14). Some deities are considered to have food preference. For example, 'Kuan Yin' is only worshipped with vegetarian food (so are the other vegetarian deities).[6] Several highly ornate suits of paper clothing may be provided for the deity's birthday

and they are hanged on the wall or from the ceiling of the temple.

There may be a 'poh wan (C)' rite (change of fate) in which the temple's seals are used to stamp on clothings brought by the worshippers. Otherwise, there is a praying ceremony, conducted by the resident monk or by hired Taoist priest for 'p'ing an' (peace and health). The priest will chant the list of the names of those who have contributed money for the festival. A Taoist priest is normally accompanied by a few other priests (his assistants) who also play the cymbals, hand-bell, chime and so on. If the temple's fund is high , separate musicians are hired and they sit to one side of the altar playing the Chinese traditional instruments such as the"Chinese guitar" ('er hu'), the bamboo flute ('hsiao'), etc.

Some temples may have a special ceremony for the temple ritual heads, chosen annually using the divination blocks.[7] These people are made up of large contributors who want their names to be added to the list presented to the deity. In the ceremony, these people are gathered in a few rows facing the main altar and are directed to bow, kneel and 'kow tow (C)' at the appropriate moments by the priest (or his assistants) who stands in the middle of the front row (see plate 15). Ringing his hand-bell and chanting, the priest sometimes sprinkles some "holy water" from a small vase using a willow twig (acts of purifying), strews a mixture of uncooked rice and salt about by bits or even a mixture of rice and coins.

Another popular feature is the hiring of a theatrical company to honour and to entertain the deity which may go on independently of all

other events in the open space infront of the temple. Anyone may enjoy the plays presented but sometimes the plays go on even without the presence of a human audience, especially during the afternoon plays.

The theatrical company has a huge cast of about 30 players (consisting of actors and actresses, musicians, etc.) and it uses the full-sized stage (either a temporary stage made specially for the occasion or a permanent one) usually with elaborate scenery and design (see plate 16). The actors and actresses use conventional costumes and make-up of the Chinese theatre. This touring company's success depends almost entirely upon contracting for a sufficient number of engagements in Singapore, Malaysia, and maybe other countries. It depends chiefly upon temple festivals at which an essential feature is the theatrical plays. These companies vary considerably in their fame and in the price they charge. A local company (from Malaysia) charges approximately $1000 and above per day while a Singaporean troupe charges up to $3000 per day.

The performances are on a basis of two performances per day, one in the afternoon and one in the evening or from mid-day till midnight with only short breaks, lasting for a few days. The play is invariably a dramatic presentation of one of the popular legends and is not necessarily connected with the occasion of the celebration. Most of these companies perform in Hokkien but there are also others performing in Cantonese, and other dialects which are more expensive.

If a temple cannot afford the services of a theatrical company,

there are other alternative forms of entertainment. One of them, that is getting considerably popular and which is much cheaper is the hiring of a projector and its crew from an organization. Movies, modern and traditional, are projected on a huge white screen (as in cinemas) and the cost is only approximately $200 - $300 per night (the movies are mostly shown in the evenings).

Certain temples have special feasts or free communal meals, served to anyone who wish to participate. It might only be fried bee-hoon (Hokkien term for rice vermicelli) in which most worshippers would pack home in plastic bags or containers for home consumption by their family (eaten for 'p'ing an'). Other temples might have a few-course feast, either of vegetarian or non-vegetarian meals depending on the deity. The ingredients for the food are either donated by the worshippers (in bulk), cooked from the temple offerings (brought by the worshippers and are left in the temple after prayers) or purchased by the temple itself.

Another event is a public performance of self-mortification feats performed by the temple's 'dangki'. The temple might even invite other 'dangki' from other temples to join in the performance. A temple usually maintains widespread connection with other spirit-medium temples which will enables it to call upon the services of additional 'dangki' and also to borrow special self-mortificaion equipments.

For a public performance, the 'dangki' usually wear ceremonial costumes while being possessed.[8] (see plate 17). First, there will be a build-

up of the atmosphere before the start of a performance. In this way, it may affect one's mental faculties. The air is thick and hazy with incense smoke and it is uncomfortably hot and the crowd of excited worshippers or audience is pressing forward and jostling for the best view-point. The crash of the gongs and the thunder of the drums may be deafening. Then, one of the 'dangki' starts to inflick wounds upon his own body with an axe, swords or a "spike-ball". Another has his tongue pierced with a thick needle or makes an incision in his tongue, spitting the blood upon sheets of yellow papers to make 'fu' (talisman). Another thrusts through his cheeks a dagger or a skewer.[9] To bring them out of the trance, water is thrown over their faces or grains of rice are scattered in the air. 'Fu' are applied to the wounds and lacerations as direct dressings. They recall nothing of their possessions.

Self-wounding is by no means a common practice of this modern time. It is hardly seen today of a 'dangki' bleeding conspicuously from his dagger wounds or of 'dangki' performing feats such as climbing the "sword-ladder" or rolling over the "blade-table" which were common features in the past in temple celebrations. We have heard of the pot of boiling oil feat performed in the past where the 'dangki' would dip their towels in the pot and splash themselves with them or even dip their hands into the pot without appearing to suffer at all. This feat is rarely seen nowadays. Even if it is performed, the feat would seem less "horrifying" to the audience. According to the informants who participated in a feat of this nature recently, the pot of oil was not brought up to the boiling point. Instead, a kind of chemical was added to make the oil appear to be "boiling" and a few tins of unboiled oil were added just before the participants put in their hands.

Another event for the occasion might be a procession which symbolizes that the deities are taking a tour of the area while the worshippers pray for peace and prosperity in the area. The temple processions seldom differ considerably. There are a few common features. There will be some boys carrying a flag each and some banners depicting the five principle colours (representing the divisions of the celestial army) and bearing the names of the deities found in the temple and they are escorted by the gongmen and drummers and so on. Statues of deities are tied to large ornate chairs or carried in small litters which by means of shafts, are shouldered by a number of people. These people holding them begin to make the chairs or litters spin and weave wildly. The procession is normally participated by a few 'dangki' (from the temple and also other temples) each performing a feat. One of them might be carried on a "spike-chair" triumphantly through the streets (see plate 18). A huge procession might even consist of lion-dancers and stilt-walkers. While touring the area, the procession stops at every passing temple to pay respect to the deities enshrined there. A few devout worshippers might place a table at their door steps upon which are incense sticks and candles burning in the incense-holder and also food offerings. When the deities pass by, they courteously salute them with bows while holding the incense sticks between their fingers and burn incense papers (acts of purification of their place). Today, processions are seldom held as police permits are hard to obtain and these processions are very expensive to be held.

Another event which always draw a large crowd of spectators is the fire-walking ceremony. This is not frequently practised as the cost of charcoal is very high. The charcoal is spread over a wide area, the least

will be about ten feet by three feet for a depth of six inches. A large one might be of 10 feet by 20 feet. The total quantity of charcoal needed is made up of small quantities presented by individual contributors with the remaining quantity needed purchased by the temple itself. The charcoal is ignited by having kerosene poured over it and incense papers thrown on top of it. A number of assistants, armed with plates full of rice and salt hurl the mixture in all directions but mainly towards the charcoal. Anyone can join in this ceremony with the 'dangki' himself first to trod and dash across, followed by the others carrying joss-sticks and statues of deities from the temple (plate 19 and 20).[10]

During a festival, the worshippers add to their chances of attaining peace and prosperity by crossing the "Bridge-of-peace" (P'ing an ch'iao'). They follow the temple 'dangki' across the bridge (constructed by using planks and is designed and is placed in front of the temple) in a long procession. The worshippers will throw a coin or a few into a can or tin placed by the bridge as they pass through.

5.2 Other activities

Besides the festive celebrations, most temples have some other religious and social activities, either frequently or infrequently. In some Buddhist temples, preachings of Buddhist doctrines or Dharma talks are held regularly, either weekly (especially on Sundays) or monthly or are held irregularly, ie. when there is a speaker or visiting monk. These talks are given by local and foreign monks or Buddhist scholars and they can be attended

by anyone who is interested.

Some Buddhist temples have meditation and chanting sessions regularly in which the worshippers would don black robes and pray together or just in the clothes they come in. Occasionally, religious activities are organized by some temples. For example, the Hoeh Beng Temple had a ceremony to observe the Buddhist Eight-Precepts recently. Devotees who participated had to spend a day (24 hours) in the temple to observe the eight precepts, ie. not to kill, not to steal, to observe celibacy, not to indulge in wrong speech, not to take intoxicating drinks and drugs, to abstain from taking food at unreasonable time, to refrain from sensual pleasures (eg. dancing, singing, self-adornment) and to refrain from using high and luxurious seats in order to practise humility. Participants wore black long robes and were not allowed to leave the temple during that period and were guided by a visiting Taiwanese abbot.

Some temples have educational programmes either religious or secular. Religious education includes theinstructions in Buddhist sutras, texts or doctrines, chanting sessions, hymn singing sessions and others. Secular educations are the language classes for beginners, in Chinese, English or Malay, cooking classes (mainly on vegetarian meals), etc. Normally, the classes are conducted free-of-charge. If a fee is required, the amount charged to the students is very small. The teachers (or staff) are mostly volunteers. There are temples with libraries containing books with a moral; retribution for evil doers, rewards for virtues or books such as Buddhist classics, scriptures or other Buddhist texts.

There are temples which are involved in charity and social welfare. Some of these temples are frequently making charitable acts (in cash and in kind) to welfare homes such as the Old Folks Homes, the Orphanages, the sicks in the hospitals and so on. Some temples give out scholarships and book prizes (or cash) to students who excel in their studies or to the poor and needy students.

Some temples set up various welfare programmes such as the free clinic. Kung Yim Kok temple offers free medical services to the public in its own clinic. The clinic is opened daily, except on Sundays and public holidays, from 12 noon to 2 pm. There is a Chinese doctor (trained in traditional Chinese medication), three acupuncture specialists, a clerk and a dispensing nurse operating the clinic. They are volunteers but with some allowances (eg. transport) and they hold a fulltime job outside the temple. The patients are charged a small fee of $1 each for the medicine provided or given free if the patient is unable to pay. The clinic is financed by the donations from the public, especially those from the temple's worshippers.

Hence, the purpose of a temple is not only limited to religious activities. It also includes other non-religious activities. All these activities depend on the popularity of the temple. If the temple is a famous and large establishment, it has many activities. However, if the temple is unpopular, the only activities are the celebrations of the temple's deities' birthdays.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Wee, op. cit., p.146.

2. On the 15th day of the 7th lunar month (the Hungry Ghosts Festival), Mu Lien, subsequently known as 'Ti Ts'ang Wang', rescued his mother from the cluthes of a gang of starving devils who were released in search of food during the 7th lunar month. Comber (1956), op. cit., p.35.

3. Elliott, op. cit., p. 22.

4. Incense offered includes joss-sticks, candles and incense papers. There are two types of incense papers :- those reserved for the deities (gold in prints) and those offered to spirits and ghosts (silver in prints). Wee, op. cit., p.126.

5. The notions of spiritual hierarchy are visually apparent in ritual offerings. The more powerful deities usually receive more expensive and abundant offerings. Carsten, S., "Images of Community in a Chinese Malaysian Settlement", Cornell University, Ph.D 1980, University Microfilms International, p.170.

6. The Malay "Na tu kung" is traditionally offered betel nut. The deity is worshipped in the Chinese manner with incense, fruits and food but pork is avoided out of respect for the Malay food taboos. Carsten, loc. cit., p.170.

7. These spiritual heads elected by the deity differ from the temple committee which is elected either by using divination blocks or by casting votes.

8. One of them is a kind of apron which is fastened across the front of the 'dangki's' body. It is made of coloured, embroidered silk, proclaiming the identity of the deity, the name of the temple and probably the name of its donors as well.

9. Some 'dangki' would use one of the instruments implanted side by side in a small rack of wood known as the set of Five Generals, the hilts being a small wooden carved head of each general of the celestial army. Yang, op. cit., p.1272.

10. Traditionally, everyone who wishes to pass through the fire must eat a vegetarian diet before the ceremony lest he might burnt himself or incurred wounds during the ceremony. Today, probably nobody attends to this precaution anymore.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

From this study, it is known that the influx of Chinese immigrants has made the establishment of the Chinese temples in Kuala Lumpur increase rapidly. Temples can be found almost anywhere especially in most of the old parts of the city. However, many new settlements are still without temples.

As the Chinese immigrants came from different parts of China with different customs, relationships among them were rather unfriendly. Hence, people of the same group (mostly dialect groups) settled among themselves, resulting in the predominance of one homogeneous group in one area. As such, most of these temples are associated with a certain group, including the Chinese associations formed by a clan, district or dialect group. On the other hand, most of the private temples, normally run by the Buddhist clergy, are very popular and are frequented by every group.

Generally, the temples were established on a small-scale but most of these have developed into bigger establishments in the course of time. Repairs, renovations and expansions were carried out whenever the funds are available which were obtained from public donations.

The Chinese religious tradition and practice have been retained through the long years of Chinese history down to the present time. In the process, the actual details of the practice have in many cases been modified by the passage of time. Radical changes which alter the ancient religious

system are now gradually coming about. The decline of Chinese temples seems to have increased in the recent years. Today, the Chinese people are getting to be less religious and less elaborate in their practices as compared to the past generations. There is a trend towards secularization which has weakened the influence of religion in many aspects of the Chinese life. Due to modern education, they have a higher level of perception and intellectual. Many of the younger Chinese have been strongly influenced by rational atheism and agnosticism and thus have considered the Chinese worshippers to be purely superstitious.

Although some of the old practices and customs still persist among the Chinese, some of these are dying among the modernists while many have become simplified and are less elaborate. For example, during a temple's festival, there are less and less events for the celebration. One of the reasons is the difficulty of obtaining police permits to hold the events. Instead of having theatrical plays, many of the temples are employing or hiring a filming crew to replace the theatrical troupe. Movies are projected onto a white screen in the temple compound. The influences of modern technology can also be seen in the other aspects. Instead of hiring a musical troupe to accompany the Taoist priest in the praying ceremony or others, some temples have started to use tape or record players to provide the classical music or chants. Even 'dangki' are using the tape recorders to invoke the 'shen' instead of chanting the invocation themselves (eg. as in Lam Tien Men).

As for the religious specialists, such as priests and 'dangki',

their functions have decreased relatively and they are getting to be less elaborate. Besides these, the continuity of their existence in the temple and their practices are a serious problem. In fact many of the temples run by them were converted into public temples with a committee after their death or simply being taken over by a laity. Their number in existence is also getting smaller and smaller.

The architecture of most of the new temples are less elaborate when compared to the older ones. Most of those elaborate temples were built not long after the earliest Chinese immigrants arrived.One of the reasons could be the lack of support (in funds) from the Chinese devotees today. Not only are the temples less elaborate, many of them are in great need of repairs.

It is inevitable that under this modern condition, the Chinese temples should lose much of their significance. Many people have assumed that modernization would substantially reduce, possibly eradicate the interest in the Chinese tradition and practices. Even so, there is still a persistent influence of these in the life of the Chinese today. New temples are still being built though the number might be small. On the other hand, major repairs and renovations are still being carried out to retain the usefulness of the older ones. Many temples are still well-patronised with donations kept pouring in. This can be indicated by the numbers of temple rticles and equipments regularly donated. These temples are crowded during festivals and some are even occupied with activities during the ordinary days as well. There is still a great deal of active interest and it is by

no means confined to the elderly folks. One of the indications is the number of spirit-tablets that can be found in the ancestral altars which are usually full or crowded. The Chinese have not totally abandoned ancestor worship.

Even though the Chinese are not aware of the details of the religious ceremonies, they still perform them with the guidance of religious specialists or the laity who are knowledgeable in the religious matters. The Chinese do not turn away completely from the religious life no matter how "free-thinking" or atheist they may claim to be. In times of troubles, they will consult a religious specialist or visit a temple. A child is taught informally of the religious tradition, especially through imitation. At least he is exposed to such an influence from a very early age to periodical rites performed at home or in the temples by the elders. Very often, a child is seen carried into a temple and at an appropriate moment, his mother will clasps his hands in hers to wave them up and down to worship the 'shen'.

In conclusion, the Chinese temples are still important and significant to the Chinese in Malaysia. These temples, as public places of worship, represent the foci of collective religious activities. They serve to bring the Chinese together and to interact in a favourable social setting. Moreover, these temples and the various festivals serve to sustain the spirit and the continuity of the Chinese culture and tradition. The Chinese have clung tenaciously to their culture and tradition and the temples will continue to provide some kind of satisfaction for some time to come.

APPENDIX 1 - List of temples

1 Ban Siew Ting (萬寿亭)
Jalan Ipoh.

2 Chong Shing Thong (宗聖堂)
No.5, Jalan Tiong Nam 5.

3 Choo Sing Tong (聚皇堂)
No.43-E, Jalan Mangga, Jalan Ipoh.

4 Choon Wan Koong (鐘萬仙師廟)
Jalan Pudu.

5 Hook Teik Tong (福澤堂)
No.3531A, Jinjang North.

6 Hooh Beng Temple
No.18A, Jalan Raja Bot.

7 Hong San Sze (鳳山寺)
Jinjang North.

8 Hsing Leng Sze (西靈寺)
No.151, South Fence Rd., Jinjang South.

9 Huay Leong Kheong (迴龍宮)
No.2, Jalan Tiong Nam 4.

10 Kong Hock Ting (廣福亭)
Jalan Raja Bot.

11 Kuan Tai Muew (關帝廟)
No.168, Jalan Bandar.

12 Kuan Yin Sze (觀音寺)
No.10, Jalan Maharaja Lela (Birch Rd.).

13 Kuan Yin Ting
No.8, 4½ Mile, Jalan Klang Lama. (觀音亭)

14 Kuan Yin Tong
No.161, Jalan Ampang. (觀音堂)

15 Kung Yim Kok
No.472A, 3rd Mile, Jalan Ipoh. (觀音閣)

16 Lam Tien Men
Jalan Kolam Air 2. (南天门)

17 Leong Puah Kheong
No.29, Jalan Tiong Nam 7. (龍盤宮)

18 Ong Boon Fu
Jalan Kolam Air. (王文府)

19 Sam Poh Muew
No.335, Jalan Pudu. (三宝廟)

20 Sin Hin Hoo
No.37, Jalan Kolam Air 4. (新兴府)

21 Sin Leng Muew
No.6, Jalan Pulasan Off Jalan Kasipillay. (新龍廟)

22 Sin Tai Muew
Jalan Kepong. (说太廟)

23 Sze Ya Muew
No.14A, Leboh Pudu. (仏田師爺廟)

24 Tee Lam Tua
No.31A, Jalan Ipoh. (地南爺)

25 Tham Wah Wan
Jalan Kelang Lama. (曇華苑)

26 Thean Hou Temple (天后宮)
No.83, 5th Floor, Jalan Sultan.

27 Tien Hou Temple (天后古廟)
Jalan Klang Lama.

28 Yong Ann Fu (永安府)
No.3, Jalan Pulasan Off Jalan Kasipillay.

29 Yuan Thong Sze
Jalan Klang Lama.

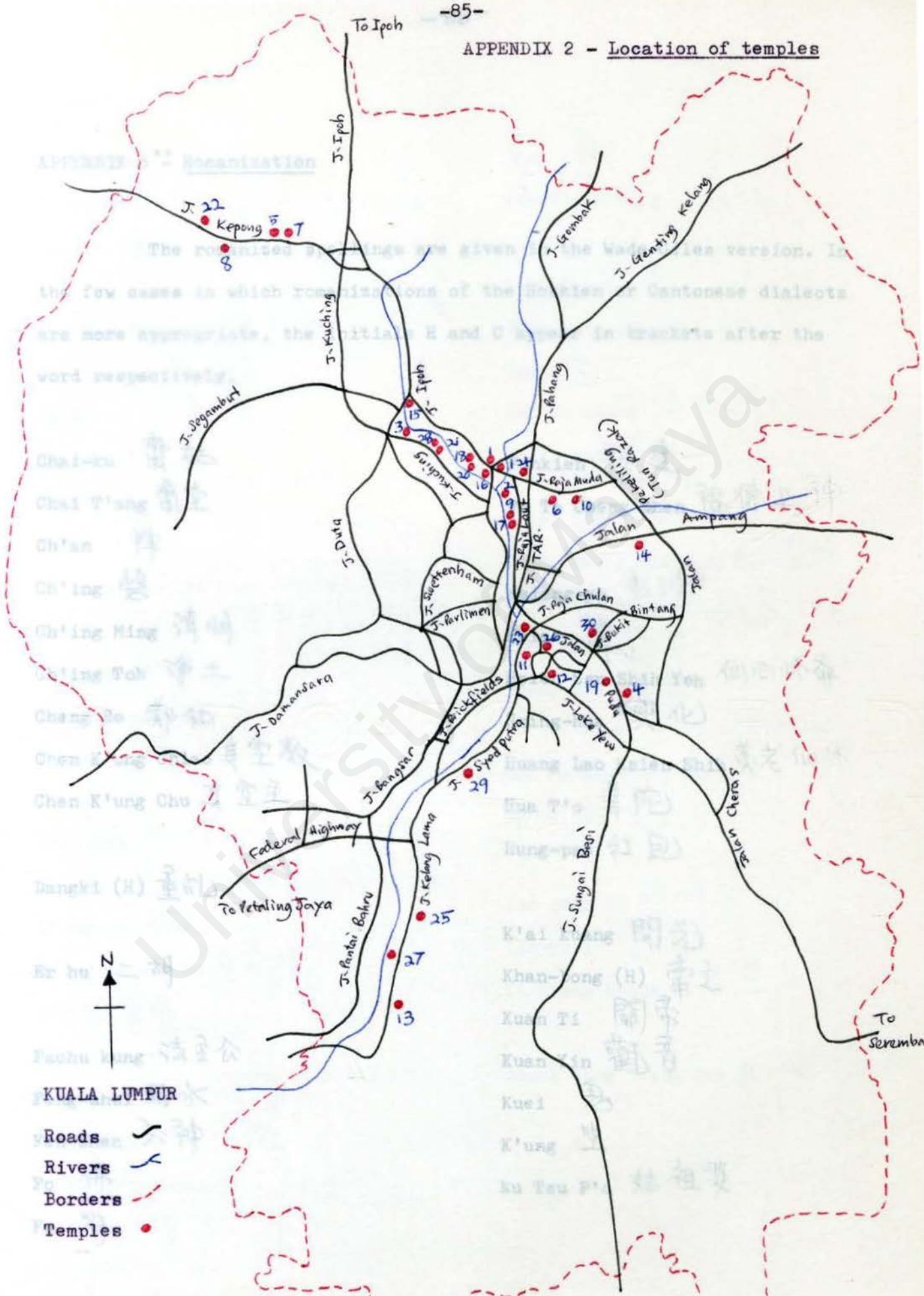
30 Zhang Gong Sheng Jun Gong (張公聖君宮)
No.6-1A, Jalan Sahabat Off Jalan Tong Shin.

Notes

1. The names of the temples are romanized in accordance with historical records and usage.

2. The numeration above corresponds to the numbers on the map (Appendix 2).

APPENDIX 2 - Location of temples



APPENDIX 3 - Romanization

The romanized spellings are given in the Wade-Giles version. In the few cases in which romanizations of the Hokkien or Cantonese dialects are more appropriate, the initials H and C appear in brackets after the word respectively.

Chai-ku 齋姑
Chai T'ang 齋堂
Ch'an 禪
Ch'ing 磬
Ch'ing Ming 清明
Ch'ing Toh 淨土
Cheng Ho 鄭和
Chen K'ung Chiao 真空教
Chen K'ung Chu 真空主

Dangki (H) 童乩

Er hu 二胡

Fachu kung 法主公
Feng-shui 風水
Fen-shen 分神
Fo 佛
Fu 符
Fuhkien 福建
Fu Te Cheng Shen 福德正神

Hsiang-yu 香油
Hsiao 簫
Hsien Ssu Shih Yeh 仙四師爺
Hsing-hua 興化
Huang Lao Hsien Shih 黃老仙師
Hua T'o 華陀
Hung-pao 紅包

K'ai kuang 開光
Khan-bong (H) 竿乩
Kuan Ti 關帝
Kuan Yin 觀音
Kuei 鬼
K'ung 空
Ku Tsu P'o 姑祖婆

Lao Tzu 老子
Lo-han 羅漢
Lu-chu 爐主

Man Mai Poh (C) 問迷婆
Ma Tsu P'o 媽祖婆
Mi Lo Fo 彌勒佛
Mu pei 木杯
Mu yu 木魚

Na Ch'a San Tai Tzu 哪吒三太子
Nan Mo O Mi T'o Fo 南無阿彌陀佛
Nanyang 南洋
Na Tu kung 拿督公
Ni-an 尼庵

Pai shen 拜神
Pa-kua 八卦
P'ing an 平安
P'ing an ch'iao 平安橋
P'u Sa 菩薩

San Pao kung 三保公
Sanyi Chiao 三一教
Sanyi Chiao Chu 三一教主
Seng ssu 僧寺
Shen 神
Ssu T'ien Wang 四天王

Ta Chai 打齋
T'an kung 譚公
Tao 道
Tao Te Ching 道德經
Ta Po kung 大伯公
[Toa Peh Kong (H)]
T'ien Hou 天后
T'ien Shang Sheng Mu 天上聖母
Ti Ts'ang Wang 地藏王
T'ou chia 頭家
T'ung shu 通書

Wen Ch'ang 文昌
Wu Ta Jen 吳大人

Yao Shih Fu 藥師父
Yin-yang 陰陽
Yu Huang Shang Ti 玉皇上帝

Zhang Gong Sheng Jun (C) 張公聖君

APPENDIX 4 **List of plates**

1. Ban Siew Ting, Jalan Ipoh(old premises)
2. Ban Siew Ting, (New building)
3. Ancestral tablets.
4. Kuan Tai Muew, Jalan Bandar.
5. Kong Hock Ting, Jalan Raja Bot.
6. Choo Sing Tong, Jalan Ipoh.
7. Sin Tai Muew, Jinjang North.
8. Sin Leng Muew, Jalan Kasipillay.
9. Cave-like altar in Hock Teik Tong, Jinjang North.
10. Kuan Yin altar in Kuan Yin Sze, Jalan Maharaja Lela.
11. Zhang Gong Sheng Jun Gong, Jalan Tong Shin. Note the "pa-kwa" flag.
12. Hsing Leng Sze, Jinjang South. Note the huge joss-sticks and triangular flags.
13. Sze Ya Muew, Leboh Pudu. Note the coil-shape incense.
14. Food offerings outside a temple.
15. A praying ceremony at a temple festival. Note the Taoist priest (in the centre) in front of the main altar.
16. A theatrical play held on a temporary stage.
17. A "dangki" in trance.
18. Part of a temple procession. Note the 4 "dangki" and the litter carrying the deity.
19. A "dangki" at fire-walking ceremony.
20. A fire-walking ceremony. Note the participants carrying the joss-sticks and statues of deities.

Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

Plate 5

Plate 6

Plate 7

Plate 8

Plate 9

Plate 10

Plate 11

Plate 12

Plate 13

Plate 14

Plate 15

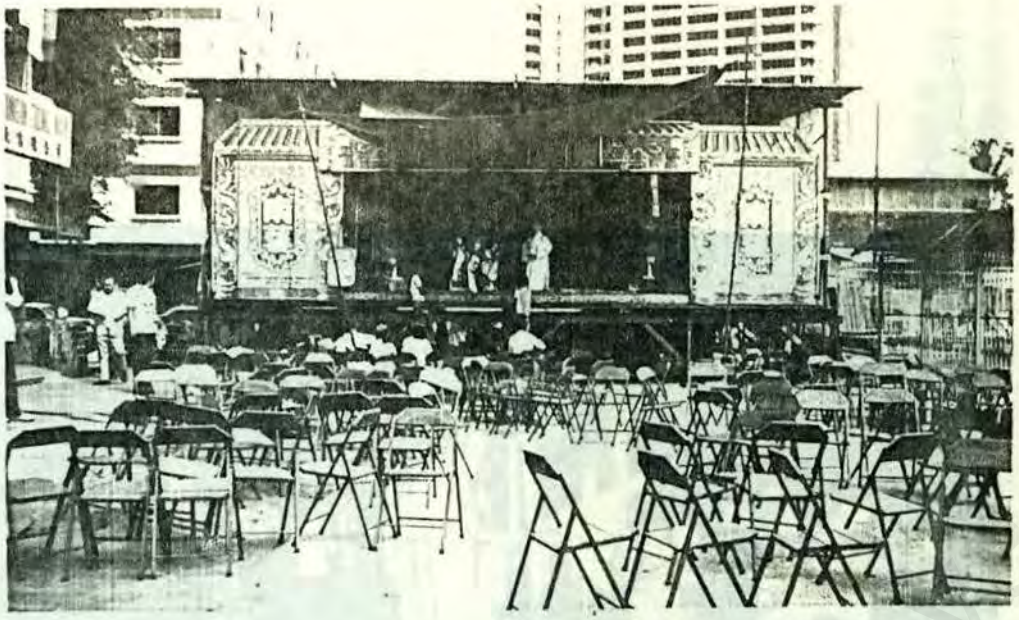


Plate 16

Plate 17

Plate 18

Plate 19

Plate 20

APPENDIX 5 - Bibliography

1. BAITY, P.C.(1975), "Religion In A Chinese Town," Asian Folklore & Social Life Monographs, Vol. 64, The Orient Cultural Service, Taipei; pp. 1-136, 189-238.

2. BLOFELD, John, Mahayana Buddhism In Southeast Asia, Donald Moore, Singapore.

3. CARSTENS, Sharon A (1975), "Chinese Associations In Singapore Society," Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, No. 37.

4. CARSTENS, Sharon A (1980), Images of Community In A Chinese Malaysian Settlement, Cornell University, PH.D Thesis, University Microfilms International.

5. COMBER, Leon (1956), Chinese Ancestor Worship In Malaya, Donald Moore, Singapore.

6. COMBER, Leon (1958), Chinese Temples In Singapore, Eastern Universities Press, Singapore.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOUTHEAST ASIAN ETHNOGRAPHY, No.2, Aug. 1983, Singapore.

8. DE GROOT, J.J.M. (1910), The Religious System Of China, Vol. 6, E.J. Brill, Leyden; p. 1272.

9. ELLIOTT, A.J.A. (1955), Chinese Spirit-Medium Cults In Singapore, The London school of Economics and Political science.

10. GILES, Herbert A. (1964), A Chinese - English Dictionary, Vol.1, Paragon Book Reprint Corporation, New York.

11. HSING, Fu Chuan (1979), A Survey Of Public and Popular Buddhism and Buddhism Temples In Taiwan, The Ohio State of University, PH.D. Thesis, University Microfilms International.

12. LIP, Evelyn (1981), Chinese Temples & Deities, Times Books International, Singapore.

13. McDOUGALL, Colin (1956), Buddhism In Malaya, Donald Moore, Singapore.

14. MOESE, W; Reinknecht, G. & Schmitz - SeiBer, E (1979), Chinese Regionalism In West Malaysia & Singapore, Hamburg; pp. 303 - 364.

15. O'HARA, A.R. (1971), "Research On Changes of Chinese Society," Asian Folklore & Social Life Monographs, Vol. 20, The Orient Cultural Service, Taipei; pp. 91 - 111.

16. SEAMAN, G. (1978), "Temple Organization In A Chinese Village", Asian Folklore & Social Life Monographs, Vol. 101, The Orient Cultural Service, Taipei.

17. TAN, C.B. (1983), "Chinese Religion In Malaysia : A General View," Asian Folklore Studies, Vol. 42, No. 2.

18. TOPLEY, Majorie, "Chinese Religions & Religions Institutions In Singapore", JMBRAS, Vol. XXIX, Pt. 1.

19. WEE, Vivienne (1977), Religion & Ritual Among The Chinese of Singapore : An Exhnographic Study, M.A. Thesis, University of Singapore, Singapore.

20. WONG, K.C. (1984), Continuity & Change In Chinese Religion : A Comparative Study of Two Chinese Temples, Graduation Exercise, Jabatan Antropologi & Sosiologi, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

21. YANG, C.K. (1967), Religion In Chinese Society, University of California Press.